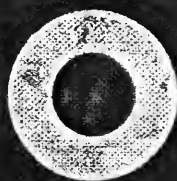


ANITA THE CUBAN SPY



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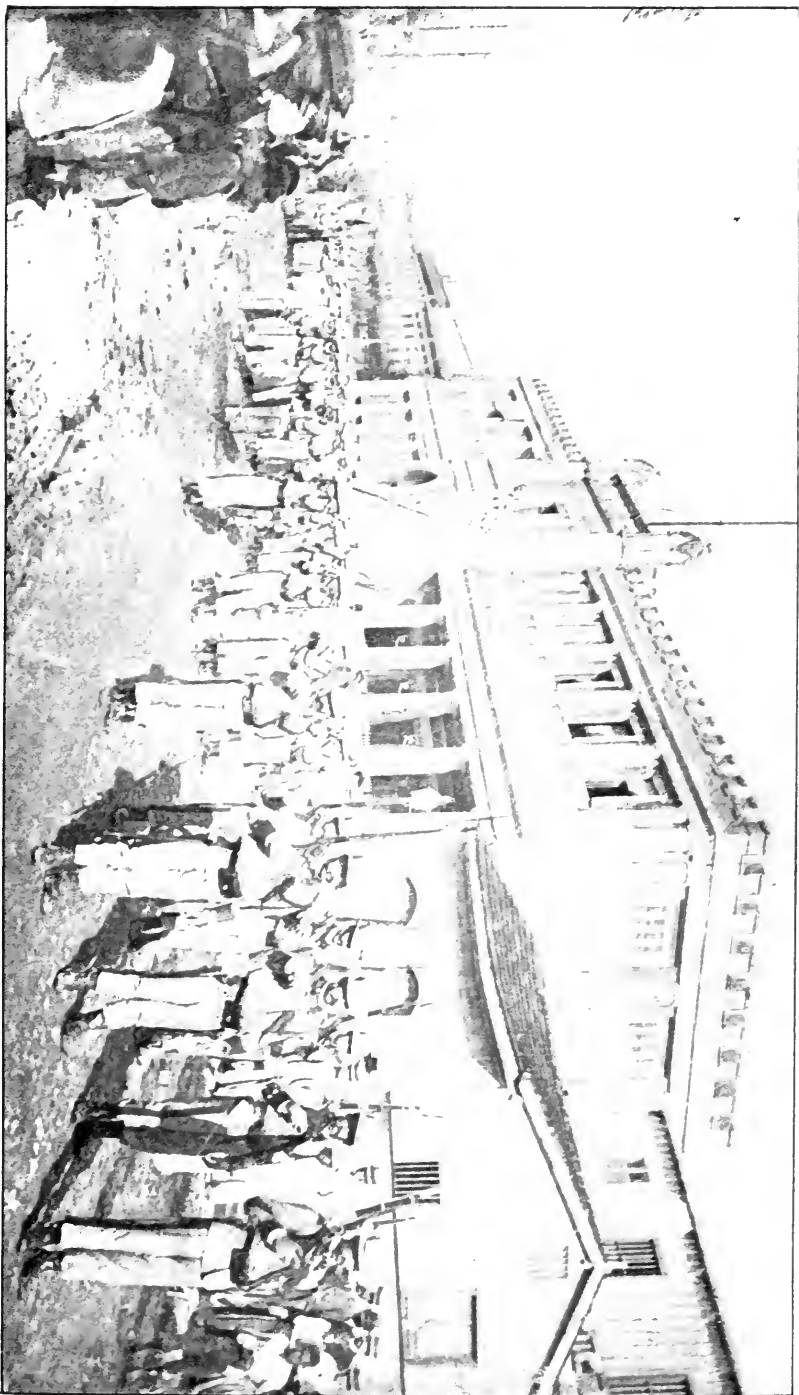
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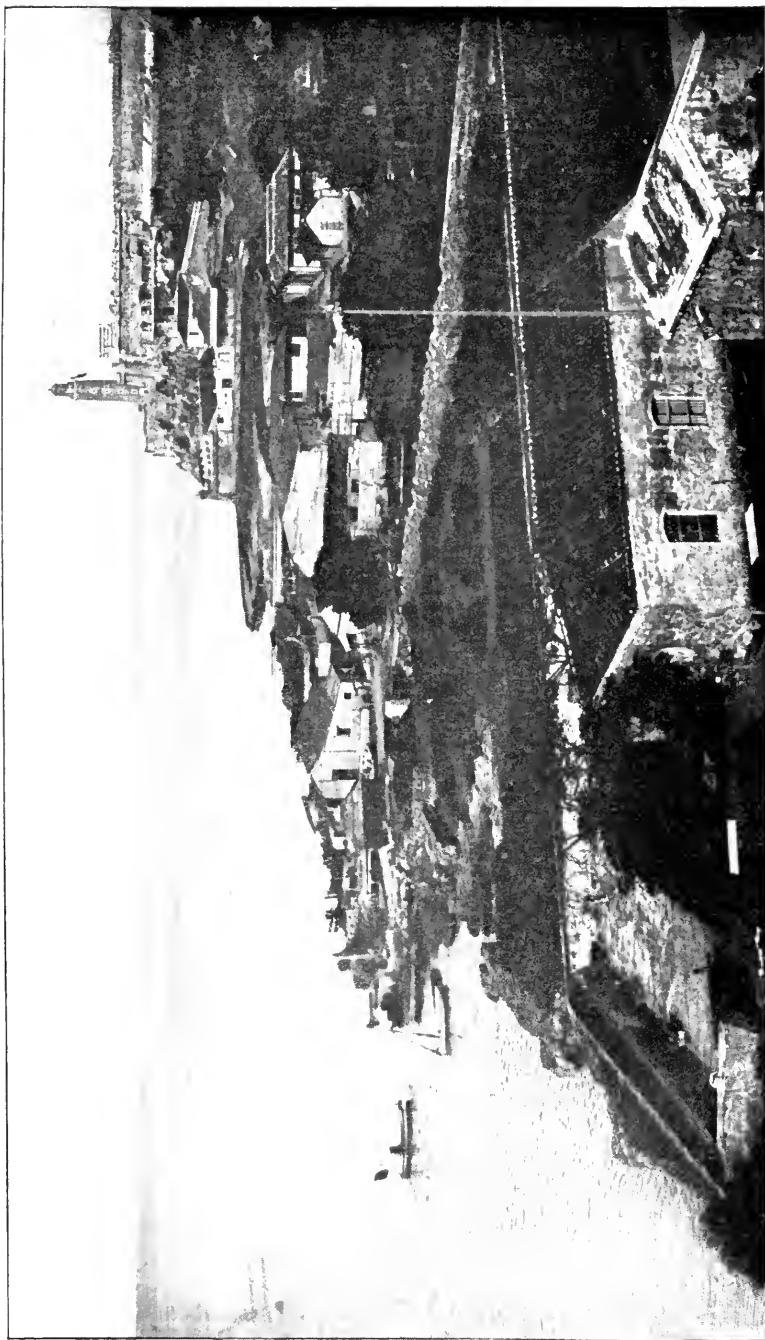
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In the streets of Havana. The hated and dreaded Spanish volunteers marching through the Prado on their way to guard mount. Early morning.



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In the Harbor of Havana. Government sheds adjoining Morro Castle, Walls of Cabana prison in foreground.

ANITA, THE CUBAN SPY.

By GILSON WILLETS.

Author of "His Neighbor's Wife," etc., etc.



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NEW YORK.

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ANITA, THE CUBAN SPY.

CHAPTER I.

SHE came out of her damp cell amid the slimy rocks and strode forth into the scorching sunlight. It was, somehow, as if a wild beast had issued from its lair and started on a prowling expedition.

The baking sand into which she sank at every step caked about her feet. When she had gone twenty steps across the plain the sand incased her feet in what seemed like clumsy shoes. When she first arrived at that place the sand used to burn—how cruelly it burned! But she had been there now two years, crossing and recrossing the plain in the

scorching sunlight, between her cell in the rocks and the bungalows of the Spanish officers. Now she was used to it. The sand no longer burned. Her feet had become like leather.

She was barefooted. She was also barelegged to a little above the knees. For her only garment was a sort of cloth chemise. It hung around her in abandon, as if she cared not whether it covered her nakedness or fell to the ground. It dropped from her left shoulder, baring her breast. The breast was round and firm—like that of a young girl. But she could hardly be called a young girl—neither could she be called a young woman. She was more like a female animal.

Her head, too, was bared to the fierce African sun. Her hair, black and very

long, hung about her shoulders. It was matted with blood. Perhaps she had been flogged not many hours before.

Her face bore an expression of horror and defiance. This had been its expression perpetually since her arrival at this awful place, two years before.

She was the laundress. She washed and ironed the Spanish officers' linen. Only the officers'—no one else in that place had any linen to wash. Back of her cell in the rocks was a waterfall and a pool. Here she washed. In her cell there was a slab of rock as smooth as glass. There she ironed. There also she slept. Thus for two years she had crossed and recrossed the plain between her cell and the officers' bungalows with the sand burning underfoot and the sun scorching overhead. Thus for two years

she had carried forth the clean linen and brought back the soiled. Thus for two years she had washed and ironed and slept—and cursed. Thus she had turned from woman to animal.

This afternoon she crossed the plain empty handed. She usually toiled across laden with the basket of clean linen.

The officers' bungalows stood on the opposite side of the plain amid a group of palm trees. The woman approached the first and largest bungalow. An officer sat on the low porch, his chair tilted back against the wall. He was playing a guitar and singing dreamily.

He seemed very gentle.

"Señor, there is no more water," said a voice.

The woman in the chemise confronted

the officer. He set the guitar down gently, as if it were a tender child. Then he showed that he was really a brute just as the woman was really an animal.

“Wench, where are my shirts? Don’t come here sneaking and lying. Go wash the shirts, lazy she-hyena.”

“Señor, to wash, I must have water.”

“Damn you, wench, there’s the whole sea. Go get a pail and carry the sea up to your pool. Surely there’s enough sea-water to wash clothes in. Now, go, vermin.”

“Señor, in the salt water the linen will not wash well.”

“Hussy, go bring the shirts. Have them here by to-morrow morning spotless—spotless, mind you—or by the Virgin we will all have another look at

your pretty back while we flog you again—as yesterday.”

The woman turned and started back across the plain. As she did so, a volume of music burst upon the air and filled it.

While she had stood talking to the Spanish officer a number of men with musical instruments had gathered under the palms. This was the band. Every day, as the sun began to sink, the band began to play. Each of those musicians was an assassin, a thief or criminal of some kind. Yet they played divinely. Even criminals have souls.

The woman, listening to the music, shuddered. For this place was a place of awful silence. A sound divine, a chord of sweet music, heard in this place of desolation was more than awful;

it was horrible. The woman put her hands over her ears and hurried on.

As she neared the opposite side near her rocky cell, sounds familiar greeted her—the sound of hammers, hammers wielded by stone-breakers. The stone-breakers were men. There were hundreds of them, divided, here and there among the rocks, into gangs. In front of each man was a pile of broken stone. If any one man's pile of stone, at sunset, was smaller than that of his neighbor, that man was flogged. Every night a number of men were tied up and flogged. The lash was wielded by the neighbor who had sat next the culprit during the hours of stone-breaking.

Then, during the day, if a man were overcome by heat, if he fainted from fatigue, that man would be flogged the

moment he regained sensibility. The wretches who lived this life included several different classes. Men of art, letters and science broke stone with brigands, cutthroats and thieves. In other words, the political prisoner was treated no better than the criminal. The high were reduced to the low. The delicate and refined were compelled to do the same work as the coarse and the vulgar.

Such were the conditions of the scene upon which the woman in the cloth chemise gazed—as the sun set. In this awful place were hundreds of men. She was the only woman. She was the first woman ever transported there. The place was Ceuta, Spain's most awful penal colony. In Ceuta, death is preferable to the torture of living. Yet many live and live, even for years.

Those who live are principally the hardened criminals. Political prisoners seldom survive more than the first miserable twelvemonth.

That a woman should have survived two years of such life was wondrous. But she had reasons for living. She hoped to escape; she yearned for revenge.

Ceuta projects from the coast of Morocco, opposite Gibraltar, like a gigantic nose from a proportionately colossal face seen in profile. The penal colony protrudes from the end of the nose like a great wart. The woman in the cloth chemise made a detour round the rocks that composed the prisoners' cells and then crossed a stretch of sand down to the sea-edge. Before her was the trackless Atlantic. Behind her, the trackless

Sahara. Between ocean and desert, how was she to escape? She shook her fist at the water, cursing it. She turned and shook her fist at the sand, cursing it. She shrieked her curses. The sea's waves, beating and pounding the shore, drowned her shrieks. Perhaps she was mad? That she had been in Ceuta two years and was not mad was a miracle. But her hope of escape and her hope of revenge preserved her sanity.

Looking down suddenly at her bosom, she stopped her shrieking and began cooing. She gathered her breast in her left arm as if it were a baby's head. With her other hand she caressed the breast as if the baby's head actually lay there drawing its life from her. One evening, eight months after her arrival in Ceuta she had given birth to a baby-

boy. In the morning the baby was gone. They told her it had died in the night and that they had buried it. She learned afterward that they had really thrown it into the sea, alive—a small meal for the sharks. They hardly knew what to do with a woman in that place. What could they do with a child? The woman, according to orders, must live. They had no orders, however, to spare her infant. So they tossed it into the sea. The mother learned all this afterward. She had only laughed and hurled her clinched fist toward heaven, denying God.

Now she stood and looked at the sea. Suddenly she hitched up her single garment and moved away—along the shore.

“I am glad they murdered my baby,” she muttered. “They were merciful

to spare my little one. Curse them! Why did they not also spare me?"

She strolled along, forgetting that she had come to get water with which to fill her pool. She had forgotten all about the linen.

As she walked, the sea rushed up now and then to her bare feet. She liked to feel the cool, crisp sand—it was such a relief after the baking sand, further in shore. She could feel the difference, notwithstanding that her feet were as leather.

She stumbled over a long pine box. It was a coffin. It was the only one in the settlement. Many a convict had been buried, not in it but from it. In Ceuta the dead are buried in the sea. This is one of the most horrible phases of life in the settlement. One coffin is

used for all. It is used over and over again and it has a terrible history. The woman in the cloth chemise had stumbled over this coffin, where it lay after the eviction of its last tenant.

The poor devils who die in Ceuta are given no burial service. Their tomb is the maw of a hungry shark, or perhaps it would be more in keeping with the truth to say the maws of a hundred hungry sharks, for one of the ferocious man-eaters is seldom so fortunate as to secure undisputed possession of an entire corpse.

The waters are fairly alive with them, and when the bell tolls, announcing to the convicts that a burial is about to take place, the sharks seem to know just what is going to happen. They have heard the bell so often that they have

come to regard it as a call to meals. There is one in particular who has not missed a burial in twenty years, and who usually carries off the greater portion of the ghastly prize. They have nicknamed him "The Harbor Master."

The remains of the deceased convict are sewed up in a linen shroud weighted with stones. The body is then placed in the coffin and taken about half a mile out to sea in a small boat. Then the coffin is turned on end and the corpse is dumped out.

Instantly there is a great churning of the water. Hundreds of sharks have silently and stealthily followed the boat, as though realizing exactly what was about to happen. Sometimes they nearly swamp the boat in their eagerness to get the coveted prize.

Now the lonely woman stood for some time contemplating this coffin. She looked toward the sea; then back again at the rough pine box. Now she remembered the linen, remembered that she must get the water and wash and iron all night—in order to escape another flogging. They would allow her no clothes. What did she care? But the floggings—She did not mind the pain, but she somehow imagined the floggings would cripple her, ruin her figure, take away some of her beauty. She knew she was beautiful, even yet. She saw her face, always, when there was water in the pool. She wanted to retain her beauty. Not because of vanity, but because she hoped to escape and to be revenged. Her lover must be punished for treachery. And another, a woman, must be punished for

jealous cruelty. Spain must be punished for unmentionable atrocities.

So the thought of the promised flogging on the morrow was not pleasant.

She looked again toward the sea. This time her eyes encountered those of a young officer. He must have been following her. He lifted his hat, bowed, said something in Spanish, calling her *Señorita Anita*.

He seemed respectful enough. They were all alone on the shore. None else was within sight or within hearing. When alone with her this officer was always respectful. He had known her in the happier days in Cuba.

He advanced to where she stood, looked at the pine box, then at the sea. Then he said irrelevantly:

“Ah, how I love you!”

"Señor Casses, you are a liar and a coward," was the answer.

"Ah, señorita, charming Anita, be thou not so cruel," pleaded the officer. "I love you."

"Then prove it," came the short, sharp retort.

"Señorita, tell me how."

"By helping me to escape this night."

"But there is only one boat. It is locked by iron chains to an iron post. The commandant has the key."

"Never mind the boat, señor. Here is the box. If I sink, I should at least have more than the others—for I should have a coffin."

"Anita, you are mad! Go adrift on the seas in that box? It is suicide."

"Perhaps it is, señor. I wish to take the chances. Before I sink a ship may

pick me up. At midnight the sea will be as calm as now."

"But the 'Harbor Master,' "pleaded the officer, referring, of course, to the old shark.

"Again, I will take the chances, señor. As the bells will not ring the sharks may not appear. Ah, come, Señor Casses, help me. You know in your heart I am innocent; that I am here through being falsely accused; that I was given only a mock trial; that while I am the friend of Cuba and the enemy of Spain, I am not guilty of the crime for which I am banished to this hell. Casses—" She paused and turned with a wild movement to the young man, encircling her naked brown arms around his neck. He suddenly shook her off, shuddering. He knew of what those arms were capable.

He longed to possess this beautiful creature, but he feared those strong brown arms.

“Anita, I will help you,” he said. “But there will be a condition—you understand?”

“I do,” she answered, her lip curling in contempt. “The condition is—my honor.”

“Your honor!” he mocked. “How can you lay claim to honor after the little matter of that child? Your honor! Ho, ho! Come, Anita, be sensible. I only ask this of you just once. Receive me in your arms, in your cell, and after midnight I will help you to escape. Don’t be a fool. You cannot escape without my help. The sentry on this post patrols from the lifeboat yonder to this coffin every half-hour. He will

miss the coffin, and before you can float out of sight in it the water patrol will overtake you. Anita, I love you, in my way—I will prove it by helping you to escape—if you will be mine, all mine, for just one evening. Refuse and—well, I'll tell the commandant of your contemplated escape. Now take your choice."

During the officer's speech Anita, with heaving breast and the clinching and unclenching of fists, had been surveying Casses with a dangerous glance. She laughed, long and loud.

Twice an officer of Spain had been found dead by her side—strangled. Two Spanish officers slain by a defenseless woman—while lying in her arms. No wonder this young officer had just shrank from her embrace. Those strong brown arms had come to be known in

Ceuta as the garrote, and her caresses as garroting.

But how came it to pass that a woman, a convict in a colony of convicts, could strangle two of her keepers without herself suffering the punishment of death? Simply because the commandant had Spain's secret orders to do this young woman no mortal injury, to give her proper food and to allow her certain privileges — till further orders. Anita suspected this. Being the daughter of the richest Cuban in Cuba—her father dead, she the heiress—her signature was probably required by Spain before the mother country could confiscate certain properties of hers in the United States. In another few months she would be of age and then she would have to sign the papers or go to her death. Such, she

argued, was the reason they failed to punish her for the killing of two of her keepers.

To-night, with her dangerous glance lingering on Casses, she panted:

“Si, señor, I submit to your condition. Give your order to the sentry who guards the post and come to me when the stars appear.”

She turned, and laughing, sped away.

Casses watched her retreat, her superb figure so generously revealed, her beauty, her grace, her strength, her history—all these things enraptured him. He had no fear of her arms now. His only thought was to know their caress, to accept her promise, to possess her in all her wild loveliness.

He, of course, meant to keep his own word by helping her to escape. This is

the way in which he kept that word. Crossing the plain to the calaboose, where the sentry was just starting on the night's patrol between the lifeboat and the coffin, Lieutenant Casses whispered:

“Watch your post to-night with extraordinary vigilance. We suspect that some of the convict dogs have planned to steal away to sea.”

When the sky was all dotted with stars and the only earthly light in Ceuta was the dim lantern across the plain in front of the commandant's bungalow, a man crept stealthily among the pink and slimy rocks till he reached a certain opening, where he bent down and entered. He stood in a sort of small cave or grotto. A gurgling and splashing told him that the water was again flowing

into the pool at the back of the cave. From the dim, vague light admitted by the open entrance he perceived a figure lying on a slab near the back of the cave.

“Anita,” he whispered.

No answer.

“Anita,” he repeated.

She lay perfectly still, breathing as if sleeping. His eyes grew accustomed to the light. In a frenzy of passion the young officer of Spain approached. He bent over till his face was close to hers.

“I will awaken her with a kiss,” he thought.

Passion had caused Lieutenant Casses to forget with whom he was playing this dangerous game. He had forgotten the garrote.

With his head close-bent over hers, two arms suddenly flew up and clasped

themselves about his neck. Instant pressure, strong and relentless, followed. He tried to speak, words congealed in his throat; his eyes protruded, he gurgled; he sank into her arms, helpless. She released him and he fell to the rock floor. He lay silent.

Anita sprang up. A moment she bent over him. Then she kneeled, fumbled, drew his sword from its scabbard. She raised the sword as if to plunge it into the prostrate man, but instead she lowered it gently, murmuring:

“No. He has had enough. Poor fellow, he was the best of the lot. His sword shall serve other purposes.”

She bent closer over him, murmured, “Casses, if there is still life in your body, if you can hear me, then hear me say—for Cuba Libre! Life to the cause

you deserted! Death for the enemy you serve!”

With that she sprang up and away. The most dangerous part of her plan of escape was yet to be executed. She flew across the rocks, reached the sand, ran to the sea-edge and hurried up the shore till she stumbled over the pine coffin. Without an instant's hesitation she tumbled into it and settled down to quietness, the sword grasped in her right hand and this thought singing in her head:

“Of course, that elegant villain did not keep his promise, and the sentry is on watch as usual.”

Very still she lay.

Presently she heard the quash, quash, quash of feet on the wet sand. The sentry was approaching. In that mo-

ment Anita again found God. She prayed:

“Oh, God, give me strength! Oh, God, forgive me—for Cuba’s sake!”

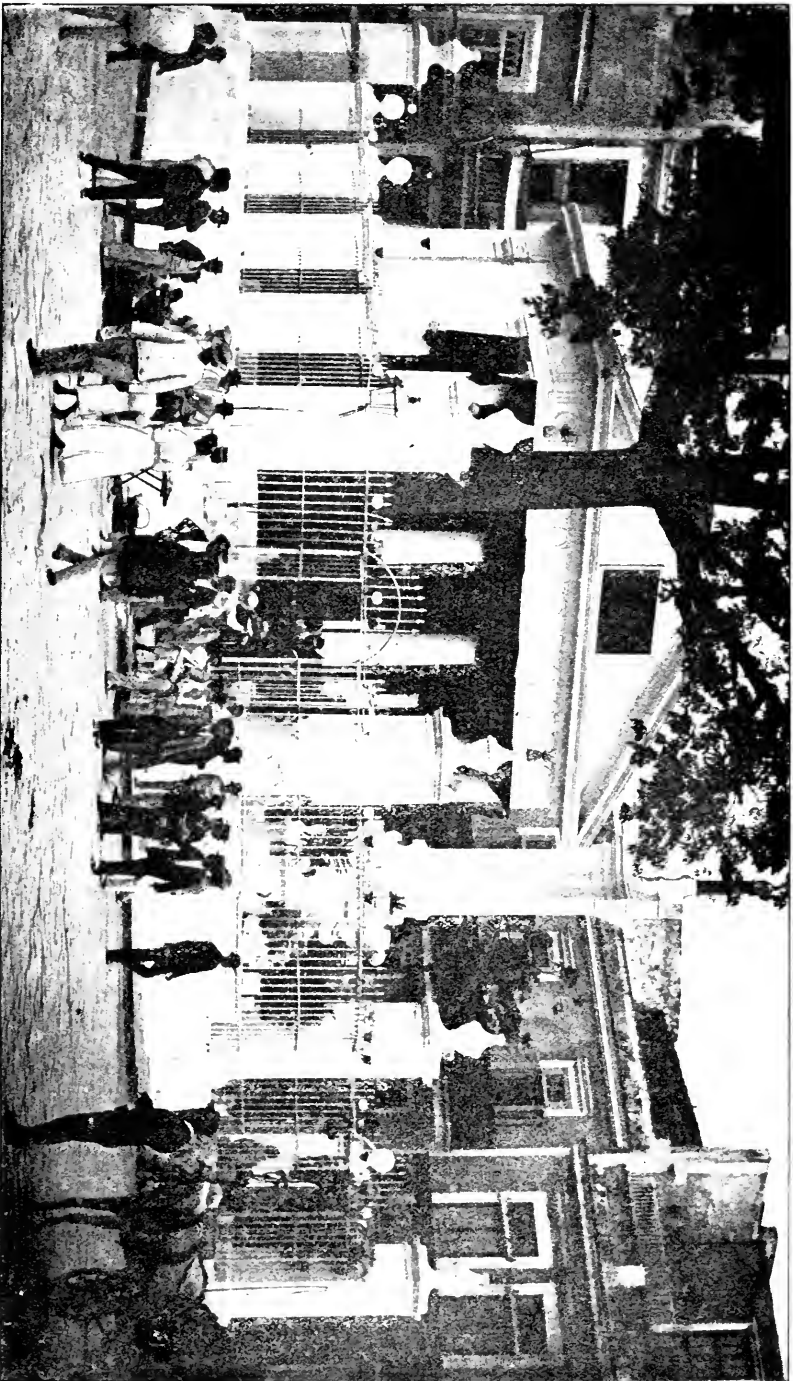
The sentry drew nearer. The toes of his wooden shoes clattered against the pine box. He had reached the end of his post—and the end of his life. For with the clattering of his wooden shoes against the pine coffin a wild, strange figure had risen out of the earth before him and had plunged a sword into his body. He fell to the sand without even a moan—lifeless, the weapon remaining fixed in its wound.

At the same time Anita sprang out of the coffin, seized it by one end, dragged it to the sea-edge, and into the water. When she had waded out waist-deep she managed by a quick and deft movement

to swing a-straddle the box—a leg on either side as an athlete would vault upon a wooden horse in the gymnasium. This maneuver, of course, kept each side of the box equally above water, and by dexterous exertions she now paddled with her feet and at the same time kept the balance so as to avoid shipping water.

There was a calm sea and her uncanny boat moved away from shore, further and yet further. When her position grew tiresome she let herself gently down into the coffin, lay flat on her back and allowed the improvised open boat to drift.

She drifted and she drifted. She again straddled the sides and again paddled with her feet. How long could she hold out? One false move would swamp her



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In Havana streets. Pilgrims visiting the tomb of Columbus in the early morning.



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In the streets of Havana. Group of professional beggars selling the food which they have obtained by begging in other parts of the city. This is a street in the worst portion of the city.

boat. One treacherous wave would mean death. How now, with freedom in sight, she longed to live!

She looked up at the stars. She had watched them night after night for two years. She knew that certain stars were directly over Gibraltar. She recognized those stars now and paddled in their direction. Those were indeed the stars of her destiny.

She knew that many ships left Gibraltar, ships going in every direction. She hoped to be picked up by one of them.

All night she paddled and floated.

Daylight came. She alone was on the sea in the center of a vast circle of water, beneath a vast dome of sky.

She was totally exhausted—no sail in sight. She had not even the strength of

hope. She dropped again into the coffin, stretched out her stiff and aching limbs, rocked to the left and rocked to the right in her coffin cradle—and slept.

CHAPTER II.

THE same night upon which Anita, the Cuban heroine, made her escape in the coffin from Ceuta, Spain's penal colony on the Morocco coast, a big, white steam yacht, lying off Gibraltar, hauled up her anchor and pointing her nose toward the sea, steamed slowly down the harbor. She had moved only a few cable lengths when the attention of those on board was attracted to the shore. Some great commotion was taking place on the landing-stage. A man stood on the bulkhead waving a great sheet of white paper or perhaps a very large handkerchief. In his other hand he seemed to hold out his hat to a man in uniform,

who stood beside him. The man waving the paper seemed to be calling after the retreating yacht.

A young woman, standing at the stern of the yacht, turned a powerful marine glass upon the excited individual on the bulkhead. The next second she dropped the glasses and rushed down the promenade deck to the bridge.

"Hubby, oh, I say, hubby," she cried, "'bout ship for Dick Van West. He's there."

"Where?" roared a tremendous voice from the bridge of the vessel. "Whale-bones and sharks' fins, where?"

"There," cried the young woman. "He wants to come aboard."

"Well, bursting boilers and bungling bumboats! why doesn't he say so before we start for America? Are we never to

have a voyage alone, wifey? Oh, Lord, there, captain, what ails you? Why don't you 'bout my yacht and go back and pick up that idiot on shore?"

By this time the yacht was swinging slowly round.

At the same time the excited man on shore fairly fell into a boat. He pulled a steamer trunk after him, then caught up a pair of oars and helped his ferryman row toward the returning yacht.

"Well, I've met you halfway, anyway, Lady Bluntly," he shouted as he came alongside. "Fast, there! Steady! Now sling up that trunk. Thanks, ferryman. There's a Spanish dollar. Ta! ta! Now, Lady Bluntly, thank you for the invitation to return home on your yacht. Arrived in Gibraltar a few minutes ago—just in time to see a yacht pulling out

of harbor. Rushed to wharf, recognized owner's flag at stern, thought might just as well return on the Tramp as on any other old thing. Thanks! Oh, of course, I'll make myself thoroughly at home. Let her go! See me in my excited state, over there on the wharf? That confounded English officer wanted to look at my passport. Well, I was so balled up that I kept waving the passport to you and holding out my hat to the officer for his inspection. Officer told me to quit fooling. I called him a blockhead for not reading a passport when it was right under his nose—and here I am."

This breathless speech was made by a fair-haired, rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed young man of perhaps twenty-five summers.

The young woman who had recognized him as Dick Van West through the glass now ordered him to "shut up" and answer a few questions.

This dignified young woman was Lady Bluntly, formerly Miss Grace Hoyt, of the New York *Diurnal*. When she married Sir Charles Bluntly two years before, she had secured Dick Van West her place on that yellowest of yellow journals. She was dressed from the waist up exactly like a man, and but for the compromise of skirts her sex might indeed be a matter of some mystery to the casual observer.

"Now, Dick, what have you been up to?" she asked. "Doing newspaper stunts, eh? Been through Spain, eh? Got a sensation? Got any beats?"

"Not a beat," said young Van West,

throwing himself into one of the great basket chairs. "But where is Charley?" he exclaimed.

"Charley" was Sir Charles Bluntly, the man who had spoken from the bridge in the voice tremendous. He had spent most of his life in America, where he was known simply as Charley. When his father, the English baronet, died, leaving his title and estates to his only son, the new Sir Charles remained simply Charley to his friends. Now he strutted aft to where Dick Van West and Lady Bluntly sat chatting. He was a small man with a big manner and a loud voice; one of those genial men of maximum stoutness and minimum height, who always have a smiling face that is round and shines like an apple on a fruit stand.

“Well, shiver me, Dick, where’d you hail from?” And he gave Dick a hand-grasp that made Dick squirm. “Well, shiver me, I say, where’d you hail from? Spain? Been stuffing *Diurnal* full of lies? Shiver me, but you and the *Diurnal* run things. In order to sell *Diurnals* what do you do? You hatch up a rebellion in Cuba, you do your best to make a war with Spain, you——”

“Enough, Charley, don’t say another word. I’ve been in Spain for months trying to get up a war with the United States and haven’t as much as got a ghost of an excuse for even a war of words. I’m disgusted. Going home without a darned feather in my cap. I was sent over here to get up a *Diurnal* sensation—to get up a war, any old thing for a yellow sensation. Well, Charley, I’ve

failed, failed miserably. 'Take me home to the proprietor. I might as well tell him sooner as later that there's no war blood in Spain and no sensations either. I'll enjoy your yacht and charge the *Diurnal* full first-class rates from Gibraltar to New York just the same.'

The 'next morning the Tramp was making her sixteen knots per hour with her nose pointed for the Azores. Sir Charles called his yacht the Tramp because she had once been a tramp steamer. The baronet had fitted her up as a floating palace, and now never traveled the seas on any other craft.

As they sailed along in a sea as calm as a lake and as blue as the sky, and with an almost tropical sun beating down, the three passengers sat together

in their basket chairs under the awning astern.

Sir Charles was ogling Lady Bluntly. Lady Bluntly was braiding Dick Van West's football hair. Dick was silently anathematizing the luck that was sending him home without a *Diurnal* sensation.

Suddenly the forward lookout cried out—a peculiar cry that was repeated on the bridge, that made bells ring and that finally brought the yacht to a standstill.

“Well, shiver my sainted ancestors! what's the matter now?” roared Sir Charles. “Do you expect the yacht to blow up? Is this to give us time to get off? What's that yawl doing over-board?”

A sailor had approached, and touching

his cap, said, "Sir—have to inform you that a peculiar object has been sighted off the port bow and a boat has been lowered to inspect the same."

"Good boy, lad," roared the baronet. "Inspect the thing, of course. If it's very peculiar, bring its peculiarity aboard. Ha, ha, wifey, how's that? Like to see something peculiar?"

"Perhaps it's a bottle or a barrel addressed to the English Admiralty Office," suggested Lady Bluntly.

"Bottle!" roared the baronet. "Bottle, did you say?" And the baronet clapped his hands furiously.

A waiter appeared. "Here, Carl, just bring Lady Bluntly a bottle—a peculiar bottle of some sort. Well, hello, what's the matter with Dicky?"

Dick, when the sailor had uttered the

word peculiar, had sprung up, rushed over the deck and jumped into the yawl with the exploring party. Now the party was returning and Dick, standing in the bow, was gesticulating in the most insane way.

“Pipe all hands forward out of the way,” he shouted. “Clear the gangway. Lady Bluntly, stand ready to receive us.”

Then, as the boat drew alongside, he called, “Lady Bluntly, throw us your spare wraps. Thanks! We’ve a woman here—can’t make out whether she’s young or old—only—well, excuse me—she has a figure and a half. Guess she’s a young one. Oh, yes, she’s alive, isn’t frightened a bit—only just hungry.”

The rescuing party came up the boarding steps carrying a pine box, shaped

like a coffin. They stood the grewsome thing in the sun to dry. Dick came up last, carrying a burden incased in Lady Bluntly's spare wraps. At one end of the burden dangled two brown, bare feet.

One bare arm also dangled around Dick's broad shoulder. Dick carried the burden direct to the nearest deck-stateroom, called thither Lady Bluntly and two maids. Leaving the rescued one with the three women, he dragged Sir Charles to the stern breathlessly, and made him sit down.

"Now, Charley," Dick panted, "I've just seen a goddess of old—in all her—well, you know—in all her glory. Oh, she's a sort of dusky damsel—all damp of course, but still dusky and—well, not ebony, you know, but just a beautiful olive color. Oh, dear, old man, I'll never

see her just like that again—never. She's beautiful, Charley, she is beautiful. I tell you I'm fearfully in love with her duskiness and her dampness and her oliveness and her—oh, she had such an air of abandon, you know. She just lay there in the coffin, innocent-like, floating on the sad, high seas, with her face turned heavenward, and the coffin shipping water every minute—lay there just resigned-like, rocking, by Jove, in a real cradle of the deep."

"Thunder and Mars, boy!" roared the baronet. "Talk business. Who is she? Been shipwrecked? Where'd she get that coffin? How the devil is my skipper to enter all this in the log? Found: A stray female, in a coffin, alive and hungry? Come, to business!

"That's so, Charley, as soon as those

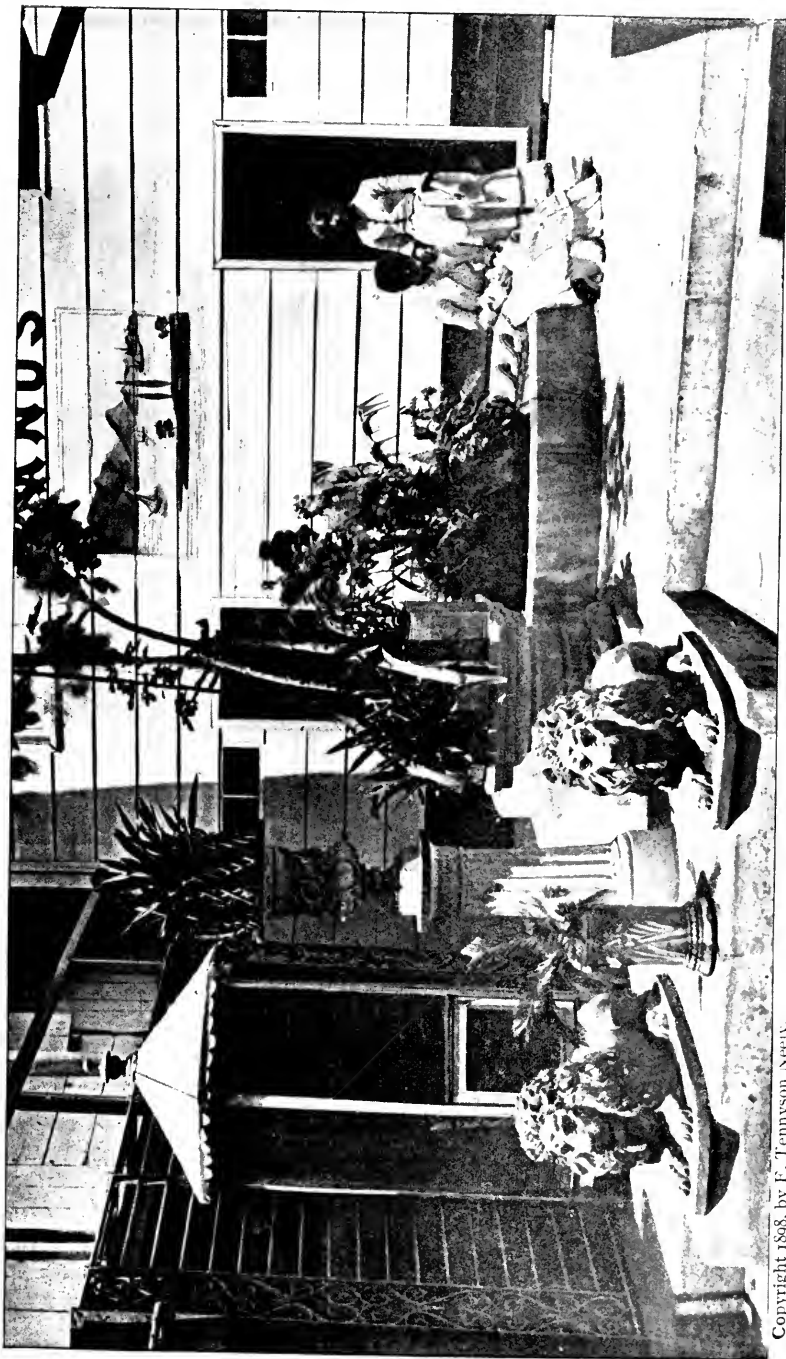
women are through with her—as soon as she's properly fed and properly clothed—oh, yes, hang it, properly clothed—I'll go pump her. She won't tell those women a thing, mind you. But just wait till I get my pumps to working. She'll confess everything. Great Scott! Charley, one doesn't meet ladies in a semi—I mean in stage clothes, floating around in coffins on every high sea. Charles, old boy, there's something in this business."

"You mean, something was—in the coffin," roared Sir Charles, as young Van West moved nervously up the deck.

Two hours later Dick Van West burst forth upon the deck shrieking, "Charley, I say, Charley—hie, there, skipper—hey, there, mate! Oh, I say, won't some one 'bout this ship and go back to Gibraltar?"



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Courtyard of a hotel.

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Must go back to Gibraltar, I say—very important.”

Sir Charles hove into sight with a series of wild ejaculations pertaining more or less to this latest outburst on Dick's part.

“Turn about, I say,” shouted Dick. “‘Bout ship, I say, and go back to Gibraltar. Give the order to ‘bout ship. Don't ask questions now, man alive—I tell you this is important. We must go back to Gibraltar. This is an international matter—international, by Jove! I tell you I've got a beat at last—and oh, what a beat! Most pathetic, most romantic, most dare-devil story of a newspaper man's lifetime.”

The ship was put about and steamed again toward Gibraltar.

Sir Charles gave vent to no end of odd

exclamations, swearing that he was no longer master of his own yacht, and if Dick Van West made any further trouble he, Sir Charles, would put the troublesome Dick in irons.

Lady Bluntly, however, took Dick's part, knowing that some gigantic newspaper scheme was brewing, and herself almost envious with her old-time love of "beats."

"Now," said Dick, "give me two hours to think things over and I'll acquaint your ladyship and your baronetship with the reason of the 'bout ship. Great international importance, you know—fate of three nations depends on our returning to Gibraltar just long enough for me to send a column cable."

Toward evening, as they approached Gibraltar, Lady Bluntly was still below

with the unknown passenger. Sir Charles was pacing up and down the bridge just by way of feeling that once in awhile he had some control over his own ship. He was smoking a long Spanish cigar and chewing it very hard and earnestly between his teeth—for he was yet wroth with Dick Van West for compelling him to put back to Gibraltar.

Dick approached, looking absent-minded.

Sir Charles frowned, looking shoreward.

Dick said, "I'm ready, Charley."

"Damn it," the baronet exploded, "you're always ready. Ready to 'bout my ship on the slightest provocation. International matter be damned. You want to go back to that Gibraltar rock, to get hold of a wire to America, and

cable the *Diurnal* a lot of tommyrot about your coffin, and your damn, damp, dusky, dismal damsel."

"Of course I do," said Dick sweetly. "That's it exactly. Greatest sensation of the year. Biggest beat obtained by any newspaper since beginning of Cuban rebellion. Whole world will ring with the news before twenty-four hours have passed. May even lead to war with Spain. I'll send my cable — only a column, you know. The next issue of the *Diurnal* will appear with my column elaborated into four pages with any number of pictures made from cabled descriptions. Oh, I tell you I've made dividends for the *Diurnal* and a fortune for the dusky, damp damsel, fame for myself, and an excuse for an American-Spanish war, all at one lick. Come

down off that bridge, Charley, and I'll tell you the whole story. That dusky, damp damsel down below is a Cuban patriot of the bluest blood. Say, Charley, don't you want to hear her story—I mean my story?"

"No! Keep your lies for the cable," roared the baronet.

"I will," said Dick, lighting his own long Spanish cigar with a most self-complacent air.

For the great rock of Gibraltar was looming up before him and the cable direct to the *Diurnal* in New York was at hand. The one great story of his lifetime was about to be flashed across the ocean.

CHAPTER III.

ON the morning after Dick Van West cabled his column story from Gibraltar to the New York *Diurnal*, Donna Isabella de Castro came from her perfumed bath, wearing a dressing-gown that gave her head and shoulders the appearance of rising out of a foam of white lace. She threw herself on a broad couch in her dressing-room and touched a bell. A maid appeared.

“Theresa” (in Spanish), “my coffee and morning papers.”

The coffee was brought. La Donna sipped it. The papers lay beside the tray, the *Diurnal* uppermost. The black

eye of La Grande Donna Isabella saw something in the largest spread-head type covering the entire width of the page. Hastily she opened the paper and read: "Rescued by the New York *Diurnal*, from Ceuta, Spain's Penal Settlement in Morocco, Cuba's Richest Heiress and Greatest Heroine, Señorita Maria Anita Verona."

Donna Isabella fell back on her couch as if she had been struck a blow. She trembled. Had she not been so dark-skinned she might have turned pale. As it was her face became livid. She crushed the paper in her hand. She gnashed her teeth. Later on, however, when calmer, she muttered:

"A lie, all a lie. Another of this accursed *Diurnal's* infernal sensations."

Donna Isabella called to her maid:

“Theresa, send Señor Don Alphonso to me—at once.”

This breakfast and morning paper scene was taking place in New York in the De Castro mansion, on upper Fifth Avenue, facing the park. Don Alphonso de Castro was but a boy. He was very rich. His ships—a fleet left to him by his father, the merchant prince of Spain and Cuba, brought him wealth from all parts of the world. This much New York knew: that Don Alphonso was like unto Cræsus with his dollars; that his wife, Donna Isabella, was older than the don; that she was beautiful, charming, tragic, and dangerous. The De Castros entertained lavishly, went out everywhere together. The young husband appeared infatuated with the wife who was older than he, while the donna

seemed to pay no heed at all to her boy husband.

The De Castros came to New York at the beginning of the Cuban rebellion in 1895. At once the great mystery began. People whispered this and that. Was Don Alphonso a Cuban or a Spaniard? Which side did he favor? To which side did he give of his substance? Certain it was that he gave large sums of money to one side or the other, either to Spain or to Cuba. In his presence this was an unmentionable subject. The least reference to the rebellion would cause the don's brow to contract; he would become as one dumb and glide away.

One thing about La Donna, his wife, however, was certain—Donna Isabella was a Spanish woman; she was for Spain first, last—always and openly. Spain's

bluest blood coursed through her veins. She loved her country, and she hated those who rebelled against it. In this respect Donna Isabella was no uncertain quantity. One could not imagine her giving way, relenting, compromising. Hers was a spirit that might be broken, but one which never could be bent. Her manner was always queenly, sometimes graciously so, more often imperiously.

This morning, upon seeing the name of Señorita Maria Anita Verona in the *Diurnal*, she had apparently received a shock. Anyway the news was a revelation. She said again and again, "It is all a lie!"

Having decided that the news was merely one more sensation of a sensational newspaper, she now began to read the story.

She had hardly read the first column when she again called to her maid: "Theresa, where is the don? Did I not summon him here?"

"Yes, señora, the señor said he would come as soon as possible. Just a little minute, señora, and he will be here."

Donna Isabella now proceeded with the wondrous story of the rescue of Anita, the Cuban heroine, from the prison settlement of Ceuta. The account occupied five pages of the *Diurnal*, four-fifths of the space being covered with pictures illustrating the most thrilling episodes of the story.

It was eleven o'clock, and through Fifth Avenue newsboys were hawking later editions purporting to contain further news. "Extra! Extra!" cried the boys.

“Extra lies,” muttered Donna Isabella, hearing the newsboys and still reading the account in her own paper.

The story was copyrighted by the editor of the *Diurnal*, and all papers were forbidden to copy under penalty of prosecution.

The author of the story was the rescuer, the liberator of Señorita Anita, the *Diurnal*'s daring correspondent, Richard Van West.

The story, as Donna Isabella read it, showed how the *Diurnal* sent Dick Van West, months previously, on a most dangerous mission—the mission of rescuing Señorita Maria Anita Verona from her dreadful exile in Ceuta, and to bring her over to free America. The story set forth, in phrase most flowing, how the said Dick Van West had accomplished

his mission. How the heroine, after many futile attempts on Van West's part, was at last rescued; how he had gotten her as far as Gibraltar, where he had stopped to cable the news of his success to his paper; and how he was now *en route* across the Atlantic with the beautiful Cuban in his charge and under proper chaperonage.

To accomplish this mighty and philanthropic purpose, Dick Van West, in his story, set forth how he had chartered the biggest steam yacht on the face of the waters—no less a boat than the *Tramp*, owned by Sir Charles Bluntly, of Bluntly Manor, England—a sportsman better known in America, however, than in the land of John Bull. Further, told how he, Dick Van West, had induced Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly to accompany

him on his gallant and daring expedition, in order that Sir Charles might have plenty of sea air, and in order that Lady Bluntly might chaperone the young Cuban after she had been snatched from durance vile.

With orders from the *Diurnal* to spare no money and to spend millions, if necessary, so long as he rescued the lovely Cuban alive, Dick Van West told of his chartering of the steam yacht and of his subsidizing of the baronet and lady of England; of his landing at last on Morocco's sandy shore and his tramping across some sort of a desert to Ceuta, where, through dint of calling one of the Spanish officers a "dago," he managed to have himself arrested. In no time at all he succeeded in getting word to the Cuban girl to fear not, to cheer up, that

the New York *Diurnal* was near and that her rescue was all planned and therefore certain.

Here the correspondent paused to tell of the dreadful life at the settlement. He described how each convict was flogged every night before going to bed and every morning before going to the work of stone-splitting; how the settlement was a place of vast silence, where the convicts were not allowed to speak a single word to any living thing, and how no one ever spoke to a convict. "The penalty for uttering a single word," he went on, "is instant death to the speaker. Every few days a live man is taken down to the seashore and thrown to the sharks — just to amuse the Spanish officers, who feed sharks in this way just as an American girl would throw

crumbs to the sparrows, all for the fun of the thing."

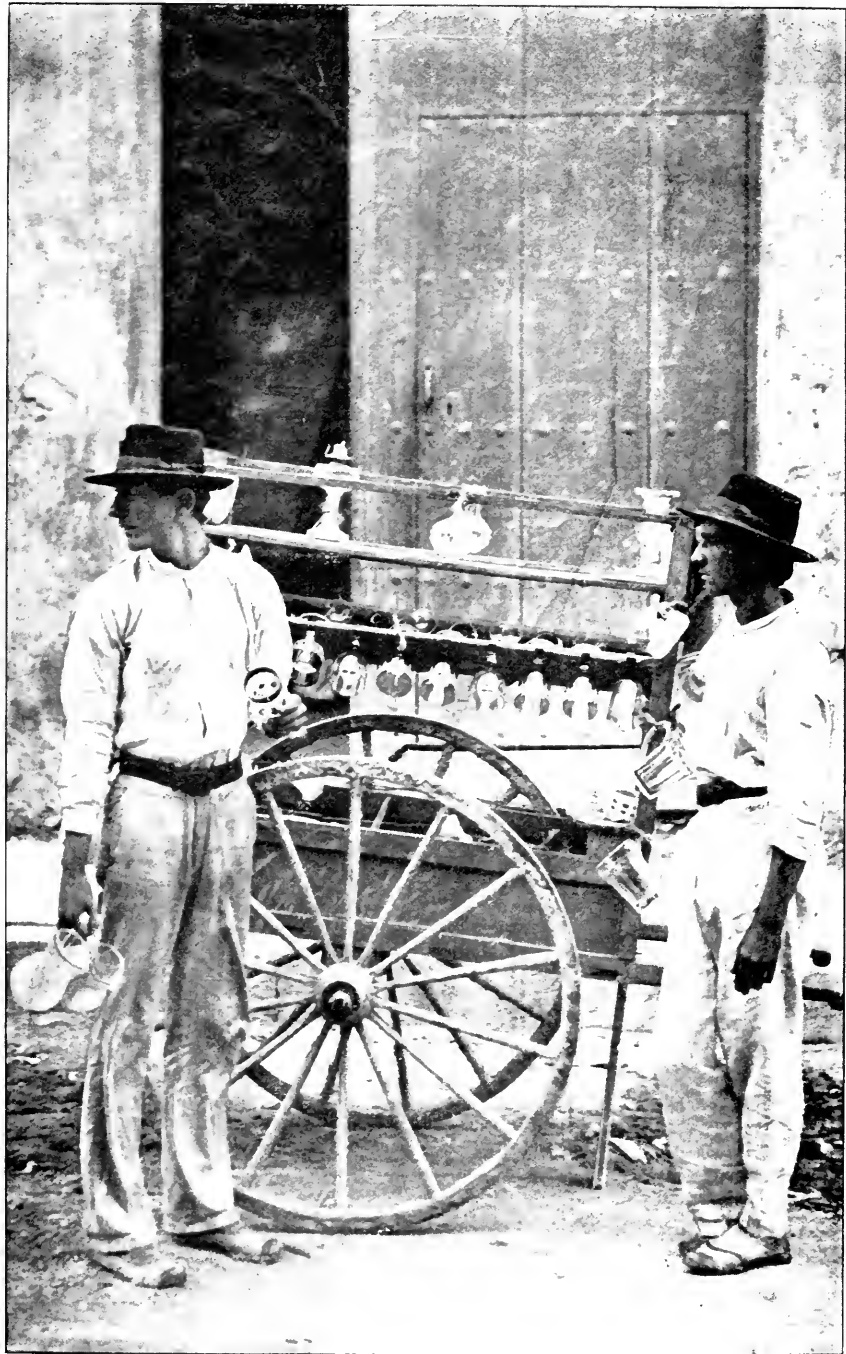
All this and more was described by Dick Van West. He excused the Spanish officers for their leniency in sparing the Cuban girl from sharks on the ground that the said Cuban was the only woman on the premises and therefore she was considered more in the light of whole pie than a single bread-crumbs—and even American girls do not throw whole pies to the sparrows. Besides, Spain had given orders to keep her alive.

Then came the thrilling description of the rescue of Anita. "At last, at last," he wrote, "I found the means of wrenching that poor suffering girl from the place of vileness. One day in walking along the seashore I stumbled upon a coffin—a real pinewood coffin. 'Here is

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Cuban girl.



Copyright 1898, by F. Tennyson Neely.

In the streets of Havana. Cuba ice cream peddlers. They are to
Havana, Cuba, and New York.

my opportunity,' I thought. A convict dies, is put in this coffin, is carried beyond the breakers and chucked into the sea, coffin and all. I immediately conceived my plans. Some poor devil of a convict would die. They would put his body in the coffin. I could yank the body out, unseen, then insert the living body of my Cuban in its place, leaving the weights out. So far, so good. I immediately signalled the Tramp where Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly had been lying to, broiling in the sun for several weeks. I signalled the Tramp to cruise up and down in the offing till further notice, as I might need them at any time. Well, the yacht obeyed orders and I began preparations. I looked around among the convicts to see who might do the dying for me.

Those fellows will do anything for money, even to dying, and I had *Diurnal* money for all purposes. But a difficulty arose. If I were heard speaking to a convict—and of course I could not put my proposition in writing, for I had nothing but the sands to write upon—if I were heard to speak a single word to a fellow convict I would have to be the man to do the dying myself. Another scheme must be hatched. Anita has strong arms. Whenever a Spanish officer made love to her she strangled him. She had already strangled two Spanish officers. She must strangle another. Ay! even one more Spanish officer must make love to her and suffer the penalty. So after arranging the whole matter, by deaf and dumb signs exchanged with Anita, I gave the wink to a Spanish

officer named Lieutenant Casses, pointed significantly to the Cuban girl and then to the stars and then to her cave in the rocks. Lieutenant Casses understood, and that night he went to his doom.

“The next day he was found dead in her cave—rather compromising for Anita; but then in Ceuta compromises do not count. Anyway, here at last was a body for the coffin. By a strange freak of fate I myself, Dick Van West, of the *Diurnal*, was assigned to get the body of the late Lieutenant Casses ready for burial. My instructions were to have the body all ready in the pine coffin at midnight. Well, the coffin was ready. Anita was in it—wrapped in a shroud. She breathed the best way she could. Meanwhile the late Lieutenant Casses was given but scant burial in the sand

on the seashore. Midnight came. It was a solemn moment. We got into a boat, three of us—ah, my pulses beat quickly then!—even then—when I perceived that in all great moments there's bound to be a woman in the case. We put out beyond the breakers, four men and one coffin. There was a Spanish officer and two soldiers. The soldiers rowed. The officer smoked a big cigar. We were far beyond the breakers. It was time to lower the dead into the deep. Then and not till then did I feel a cold chill creeping down my spine. I had forgotten that I too must escape in order to save Anita. The two soldiers had stopped rowing. They had grasped the coffin, one at either end, and awaited the officer's command to drop it into the deep, deep sea. That officer never gave

the order. There is nothing like a chill running down one's spine to give one ideas. My ideas were murderous, they were dastardly—but at all risks I must save Anita. Quicker than a flash I fell upon the officer, whisked his swordblade from its scabbard and with it dealt him a blow that knocked him senseless. In another flash I had served the two sailors in the same way. The coffin fell overboard.

“I jumped overboard and left the boat containing the insensible men to the mercy of the rising tide, which, I reasoned, would float them shoreward. I had no fear for myself, for I knew the Tramp was in the offing. But good heavens! Where was Anita? In the coffin, of course. But where was the coffin? Horrors! The coffin was drown-

ing, though Anita was the only weight in it. I splashed about in the water. Of a sudden my hand came in contact with a solid substance. I thanked God. It was the drowning coffin! Now or never that coffin must be saved. Seizing it with one hand and ripping off the cover with the other, swimming along meanwhile with only my legs, I cried: 'Anita! Anita! Awake, freedom, America, await you!' At last I had the supreme satisfaction of seeing that lovely girl break loose from her shroud as a new chick breaks away from the egg-shell.

"She sat up, screwed her fingers into her eyes. 'Where am I?' she asked, in sweet, faint tones that still linger in my ears. 'Where am I?' she asked so pathetically! And I answered her, say-

ing, 'Señorita Maria Anita Verona, I congratulate you in behalf of the American people and the New York *Diurnal* on your most fortunate escape from yonder vile colony of convicts. Pray, remain calmly seated in this coffin while I push you out to the offing, where a palatial yacht, commanded by a peer of England, awaits us.' Now, for genuine presence of mind, I commend to the American people this true daughter of Cuba—she who has suffered tortures in that most damnable prison place, all for the sake of Cuba Libre. Two hours later the Tramp picked us up, and now, twelve hours later, I am sending this dispatch from Gibraltar. I shall arrive in New York with our beautiful heroine in about seven days."

Such, in substance, was Dick Van

West's story. The *Diurnal* then proceeded to state further that a great public reception would be given to Señorita Anita in Madison Square Garden on the evening of her arrival; that she would occupy the state suite of rooms at the Walford Inn, that she would be properly chaperoned by Lady Bluntly while in America; that she would write a book embracing her history from infancy to the present moment; that she would make a tour of the whole country with the *Diurnal* correspondent, Richard Van West, as her manager, exhibiting to all the famous coffin in which she made her escape from Ceuta—all, all of course under the direction and at the expense of the New York *Diurnal*.

Donna Isabella read all this with breathless interest. Still, when she had

finished, she repeated: "Lies!" The month was January, and a fire blazed in the grate. She crossed the room, crumpled the paper into a ball and threw it into the fire. Then, calling again to her maid, "Theresa, tell Señor Don Alphonso that I have changed my mind. I cannot see him this morning. Dress me. Hand me my engagement book."

For a moment she surveyed herself in the long mirror. She smiled. A beautiful woman, beholding herself in the mirror, cannot refrain from smiling. There's a certain smile that indicates a consciousness of power.

"And if it should be true," she muttered, "if she comes to New York—if the boy sees her—if— Ah, then let them both beware! This time I can crush both—utterly."

CHAPTER IV.

MEANWHILE, Don Alphonso de Castro, master of the mansion and head of the largest Spanish-American shipping house in New York, was pacing up and down his rooms on the floor above Donna Isabella's. He was certainly agitated.

He was apparently suffering. He seemed like a man who, ordinarily passive, has been roused by some sudden shock into a man of action. The morning *Diurnal* lay on his desk in the center of the room. He walked round and round the desk. Once or twice he stopped, made as if to open one of the drawers, then straightened up, rapped on the desk and said bravely, "No!"

He paced nervously forth and back—then again around the desk. As if acting upon a sudden resolve he hastened to the door and turned the key. Then he said, “Yes!” He went back to the desk, sat down, opened a drawer, pressed the spring of a secret compartment, and from the last took out a photograph. It was of a young girl with large and glorious eyes, eyes that pleaded and looked love, indicating a strong nature.

The don took the photograph in his long, tapering, artistic fingers and surveyed it silently—a long time. His chin sank upon his breast. A tear dropped upon the photograph. It startled him. He laid the photograph on the desk and fell to his knees, leaning his head forward till his cheek rested on the pictured face. “Dear one!” he

murmured. "Ah, if you could only hear me, your lover! If you could only hear me say I love you! Forgive me; be mine, my all, my wife. Ah, dear one, how could I have treated you so? Was it that I loved you less and the other more? No, they took you from me—they swore you were dead. I was a fool. I believed them. And all this time you must have thought me a traitor, a betrayer, a something worse than villain. Ah, dearest, my betrothed—my Anita—if this news is true—you shall see—I shall explain all—right all—take you for myself. For in the sight of the Holy Virgin you are mine—and mine you shall be."

Some one knocked on the door. It was probably the maid, Theresa, come to say that the donna would not see the

señor, after all. The don did not answer the knock. The maid went away.

“For seven days more, my Anita—for seven days,” he murmured.

He returned the photograph to its secret compartment, locked the drawer, arose, and drew a long breath.

He now showed to best advantage. He was slightly taller than the average Spaniard; had a tender and gentle eye deep-set under thick, black brows, the delicate features of a Castilian, the general air of a man bred to command. He was perhaps too handsome—so handsome as to be effeminate. For this reason some people thought him weak. In one respect he was weak. It was in the respect that he had failed to discover until too late the difference between

infatuation and love. He had mistaken the one for the other—and now he lived with Donna Isabella, was practically her slave—while the young girl of his heart had been suffering cruelly, though unknown to him, and had been rescued by a stranger.

A stranger! Richard Van West. Don Alphonso knew Van West as a young man of good family—indeed, one of the best old Holland families in New York. Now the don felt a rising hatred for Van West and he tried to quell it.

He again paced the floor.

A stern look had come into his face. It settled about his mouth and in his eyes.

“What first?” he asked himself.

He went to a small apartment connected with his room. Here was a tele-

phone, a private wire, direct to his office downtown. He rang the bell.

“When does the fleet of seven start for Florida?” he asked. “Very well,” he added, “hold clearance papers for seven days. I may have other orders.”

In his business house at least he knew that he was sole master, and he knew that the “fleet of seven” would be in waiting when he wanted it.

He went back to his desk, leaned down till his lips touched the drawer containing the secret apartment. “Darling,” he whispered.

Looking up, his eyes fell upon a large painting, a panel in the wall. Here was represented a woman in all the splendid fulfillment of life, a woman of regal beauty—he kissed his hand to it and whispered, “Devil!”

He descended to the next floor and entered the donna's room without ceremony. The maid was dressing her mistress, who was rather *en dishabille*.

"Alphonso," she said reprovingly, "you did not knock before entering. Be more careful in future."

Alphonso said nothing. He simply put his hands in his pockets, went to the window and looked out. He saw a brougham waiting below in the avenue.

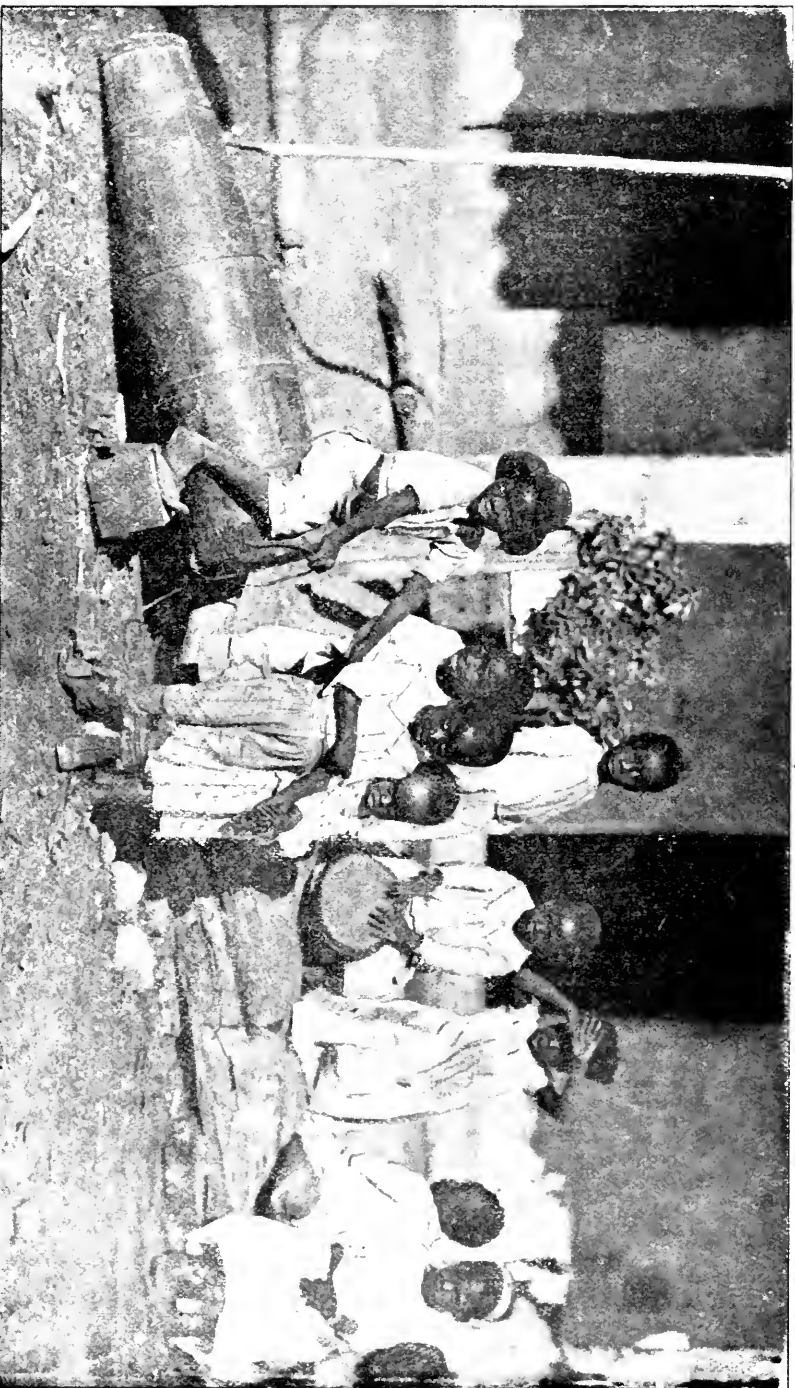
"I said you were not to enter my rooms without knocking," repeated the señora with some asperity.

"I heard you," he answered.

"You are cross this morning, my Alphonso. Pray, leave the room."

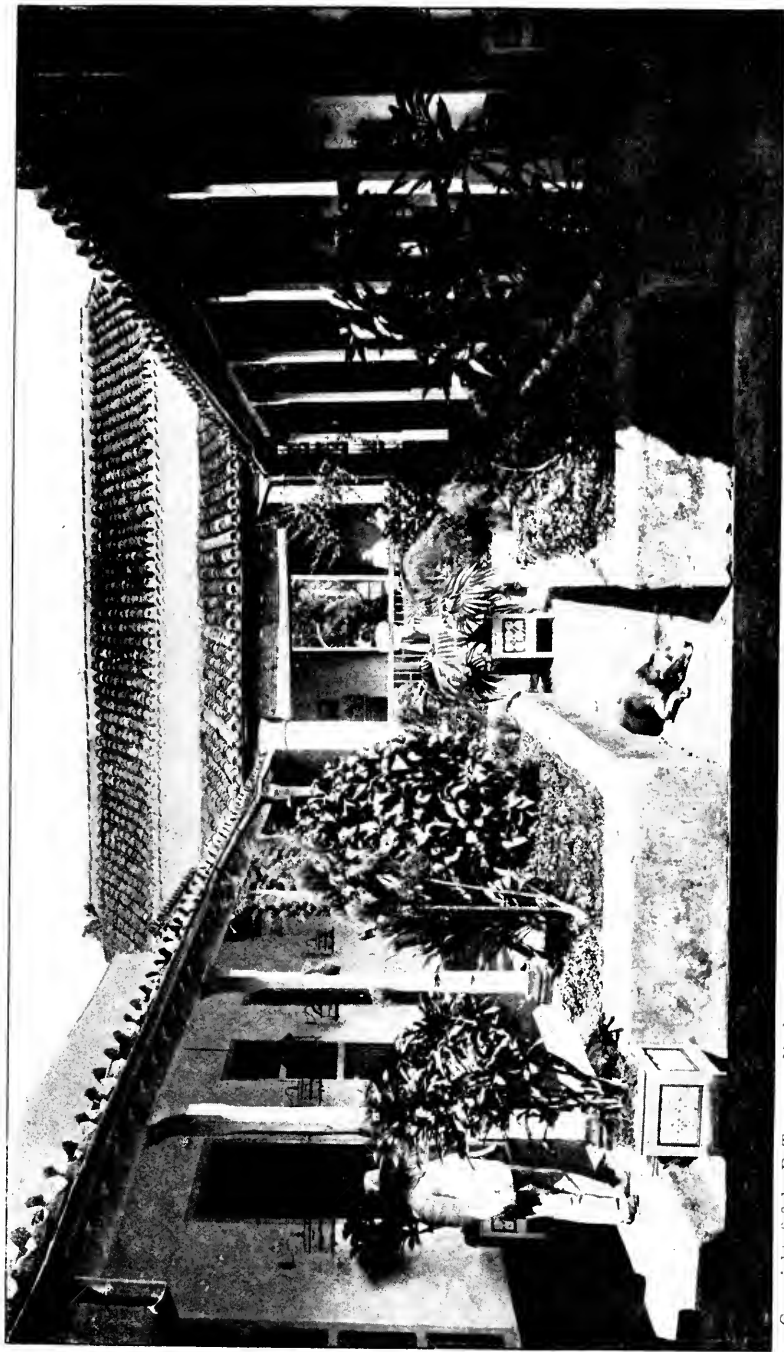
He remained—silent.

"Why do you not leave the room?" exclaimed the donna angrily.



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In the streets of Havana. (Group of negro children playing in front of schoolhouse. These are members of the senior class. At the age of eight they graduate. No further schooling for negroes is provided for by the Spanish Government.)



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Domestic life in Havana. A courtyard in the centre of the house of a rich Cuban family. Photo taken early morning. Showing the Senior trimming his lemon and banana trees, the Señora and La Señoritas in background, the inevitable dog, and the usual number of bird cages.

"Because I wish to remain," he said stubbornly.

"You wish to remain," she sneered. "I believe you remarked only last night, for the two-thousandth time, that my wishes are yours. I wish now to be alone."

The don wheeled suddenly and said very quietly, "Theresa, leave the room."

The maid went away—she almost ran; for when the master spoke like that all obeyed instantly.

"Isabella," said the master, "you have read—the—a—morning papers?"

"Yes," sweetly.

"Well?" determinedly.

"Well?" exasperatingly.

"Well, Isabella, I believe the news is true."

"And I, my dear Alphonso, believe

the news is a lie. The *Diurnal* always lies. And you are always such a boy, my Alphonso. When will you be a man?"

"Now," came the abrupt and unexpected answer. "Now," he repeated. "You said that you wished to be alone. Hereafter your wishes shall be subordinate to mine. I wish to speak with you. Hereafter my wish shall be your law. Why did you lie to me about—about her?"

"About whom?"

"You know to whom I refer. Come, it is my wish that you throw off this highy-tighty air and become serious."

He had advanced to where the señora sat adding to her thick black tresses the hairpins which Theresa had been ordered to abandon. Her shoulders and

arms were bare and voluptuously beautiful. He grasped her arm tightly—too tightly. His grasp hurt.

She said: "Oh!"

"Never mind your pain," he said, without relaxing his grasp; "tell me the truth. Why did you lie to me about her?"

She laughed in his face—a long, ringing laugh, though she was suffering with the pain of his vise-like grasp.

"So this is the inquisition," she said, still laughing, "and you are the inquisitor."

A warning light was in his eye. She noticed it. Her own eyes flashed dangerously. With a leonine movement she snatched her arm away, sprang up and threw herself upon him, caressing him, pleading with him, giving him

whiffs of her breath, showing him her eyes swimming with passion. She was a tempest. This was the way she had wrecked him again and again—for he was too frail a ship to withstand such a storm. She allowed her garments to fall from her shoulders, revealing a dazzling magnificence of skin. She knew that in his present mood the only way to win him was by appealing heroically to his senses. She kissed him—she bit him with kisses.

He sank into a chair, she fell before him on her knees—and implored him to kiss her, to stop “looking so,” to remember their past and their present, and for her sake to forget that other, whom, she said, she still believed to be dead.

He seemed subdued. Womanlike the donna followed up her advantage by

talking. She knew that a man, especially a man half-blinded by infatuation, can be kept in silence by a woman's tongue.

She sprang up, feeling sure of her victory. "And now, my dear Alphonso, poor boy, you were a little sentimental about the sudden and false news, were you? Well, we'll soon cure you of that. We'll have one round of festivities. I expect the Spanish minister here to-day, perhaps this afternoon. He will call, my dear Alphonso. You know what he will call for. The next payment is due—as promised."

Alphonso remained silent. He seemed a child in this woman's hands. She thought she knew him thoroughly. So she did, till that morning.

With quick movements she dressed

herself. In a few moments she stood before him ready to go out. She held out her hand.

“Good-by, dear, for an hour or so. We will have luncheon at two, here—probably with the misister De Lima as our guest.”

He did not look up. He contemplated his hands, looking them over carefully.

“Isabella,” he said at last, “I know your tricks.”

“Of course you do, dear boy,” she said lightly. “We women who love must have our little tricks or you men who love us will stray away.”

“Isabella, the Spanish minister—Señor de Lima—you know—well, he may go to the devil.”

“Ah, my dear Alphonso, a pretty sentiment from a subject of the King of

Spain. Come now, run, get the check ready. Six figures, mind you. You won't allow Señor de Lima to ask you to keep your promise, will you? Come, anticipate. Be my own Alphonso."

"Isabella, Anita will be here in seven days."

"Ah! she is still in your mind, is she? Well, what then?"

"I shall, Isabella, I shall marry her, if she still loves me."

"Alphonso—be careful. Remember this is no child's play. I have never told you of my—er—ahem—my official position, have I?"

"Your official position? What do you mean?"

After carefully adjusting an extra hat-pin, the señora turned to Alphonso and said nonchalantly, "Secret agent."

The don jumped up, anger written in his face. "Good God, Isabella, Spain's secret agent! And this, after you gave me your word that the help you obtained from me was only in a philanthropic way to assist the wounded. Have you also broken your word in that you have handed over to Spain the name of the giver of all this money?"

"I have," she said quietly. "Alphonso, I fight for one country—Spain. For one cause—Cuba ever Spanish. You understand?"

"Yes, I understand, you she-devil," he exclaimed, beside himself with rage. "Now suppose you understand me. Not a dollar does this Minister de Lima get from me, not another dollar shall you receive for this hellish underhand work. There's been too much killing on the

island of Cuba already. Not another dollar of mine shall assist the wholesale massacre. Moreover—if Anita comes, I will do as I have said. I shall marry her.”

La Donna drew on her last glove, took up her muff and lorgnette, started to leave the room, but paused on the threshold to say:

“Well, my dear Alphonso, as you wish. But be warned. You are in my power. It would be quite dangerous, I assure you, for you to desert me at this stage of the game. A scandal for me means worse for you. As for that little Cuban girl, leave her to me. If the news is true, and she really comes here, I will twist her round my little finger—so.”

“I’m not so sure of that, Isabella.

Anita's experiences since we last saw her are not warranted to preserve her mild, angelic nature."

"Ah, you think so! Well, Alphonso, my love, think well—the man who marries Anita Verona marries certain and horrible death."

Alphonso went to the window. In a few minutes he saw the donna enter the brougham. It drove away at a rapid pace.

"Devil!" muttered the don. "In seven days we shall see."

CHAPTER V.

At four o'clock in the afternoon on the seventh day after the foregoing scene, Don Alphonso de Castro sat in his library on the floor above the donna's rooms smoking his Havana perfecto and writing.

"Extra! Extra!" came the sudden cry from a brazen throat in the street below.

Alphonso tapped a bell. His manservant came in. "Juan, see what that extra is about."

Juan disappeared only to reappear in a moment with an evening *Diurnal* extra which he laid before his master and then retired.

Alphonso read: "Arrival of Señorita Maria Anita Verona, on the Tramp, from Gibraltar. Accompanied by Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly and by her brave rescuer, Richard Van West, of the *Diurnal*. Big public reception to the Cuban heroine at Madison Square Garden this evening."

Alphonso read on. All the details of the voyage were given. On another page he read, "The Cuban army at a standstill for want of arms and ammunition. Starving for want of provisions, etc., etc."

The don pressed his lips together.

"Why is Anita selling herself to that newspaper?" he asked himself.

There was only one answer—money. She certainly had only one motive—Cuba Libre.

Alphonso sprang up and in the next room to the telephone and rang up his office. "Give the fleet of seven their clearance papers," he ordered. "Let them proceed to Key West, discharge cargo, take on new cargo which will meet them there and await my orders."

Then he connected his private wire with the public one, ordered "Central" to give him a certain number on the long-distance wire. In another two minutes he was talking with a certain firm in Springfield, Massachusetts, famous for the manufacture of arms and ammunition. He gave an order—a stupendous order, "To be shipped as provisions." Next he called up the largest wholesale provision house in Philadelphia and gave another stupendous order. The goods from both places he ordered shipped to Key West.

He went back to his library, excited, eager, anxious. He touched the bell that summoned his man-servant. The man did not come.

“Probably he’s out,” thought Alphonso. And he proceeded unassisted to dress for the evening. When at last arrayed in dinner coat and the usual expanse of shirt front, he started out. Strange, the door was caught. It could not be locked, of course, for the key was on his side. He pulled the door hard. He pushed it.

“Damn the door,” he muttered, as a man would. “What’s the matter with it?” He tried it again—and again. Certainly he could not get out that way. He went through into his bathroom. There was a door there leading into the hall. This door he also tried to open.

It was locked, apparently, on the outside, though the key, as in the other room, was on the inside. Strange! Some mistake he thought. Anyway, in city houses there are not many doors leading out of a single apartment. He went back and tried the library door. Here again, resistance. Plainly, the only means of exit had been locked on the outside, probably by some blundering servant who thought the master had gone out.

“Well, I’ll knock the door down then.” He seized a heavy oaken desk chair, and with a strength of which he did not seem capable he struck the door a blow which made it crash outward. But what was this? The door had crashed against what seemed a wall of iron. He tested it—it really was an iron wall, or anyway

an iron door. With the heavy oaken chair he made an assault on this new barrier, but with no result. The iron wall or door was evidently put there to resist just such onslaughts.

Mystified and angry, he dropped the oaken chair and sat down to get his breath and to think. Was this the señora's work? If so, why? Ah, was it because of the arrival of Señorita Anita?

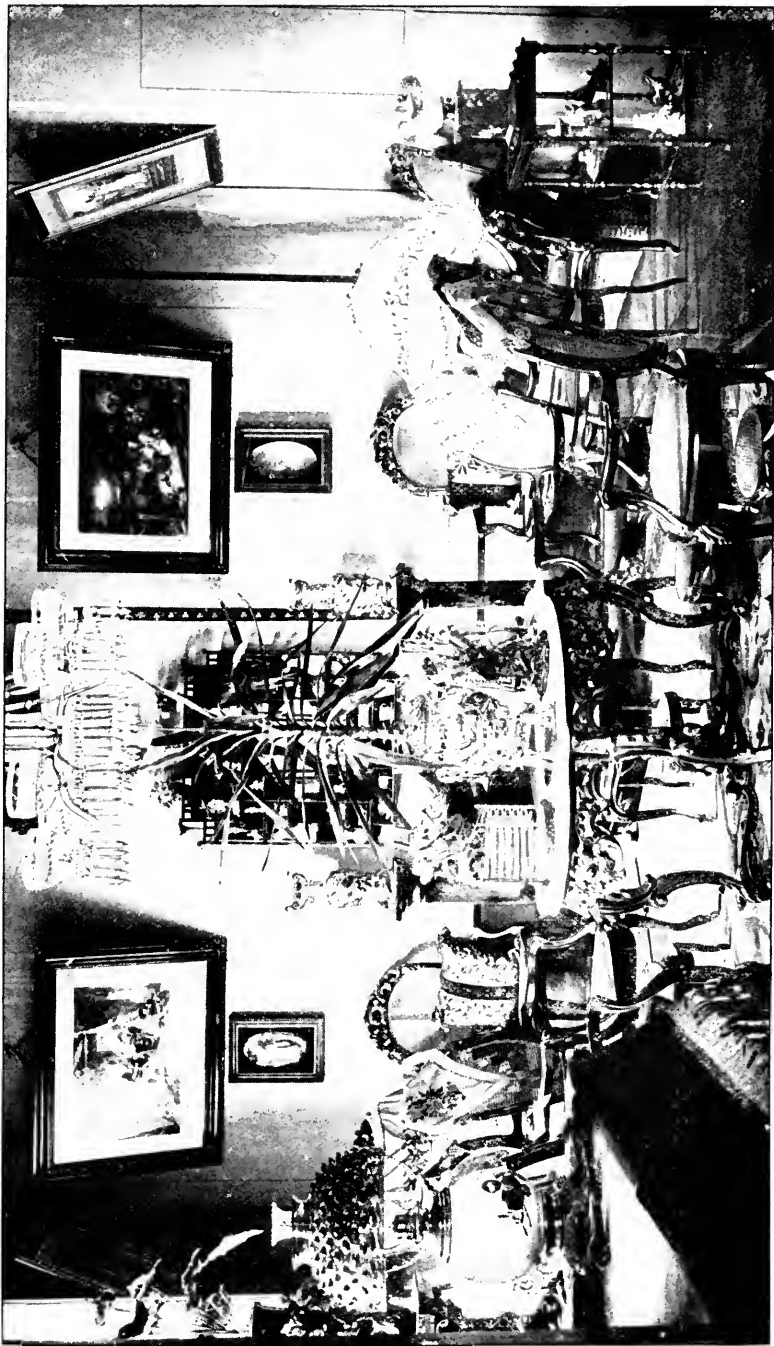
"The telephone," he exclaimed aloud, and he sprang to the inner room and rang the bell furiously. "See here, see here," he shouted excitedly. "I'm locked in—hey—don't you hear me, I'm locked—what?" Only silence. No answer. The wire had evidently been cut.

He returned to the library. Without



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Havana. Residence of Civil Governor. Showing coaching in livery.



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Cuban reception room.
opens directly into the room.

House in Havana. This room is always directly off the street. The front door

warning the electric lights went out. He remembered that he had so arranged these lights that they could be turned on or off from the hallway—for his convenience at night on coming in. But they could also be worked from the inside.

He groped around the wall till he found the button. He pressed it, pressed it again. No light. Evidently the electric wire had been tampered with, as had been the telephone service. He bit his lip. Then he swore—many round, ripe Spanish oaths.

Did he hear the whispering of silken skirts, or was he mistaken? Anyway he heard a clicking in the wall. Oh, for a light! What a fool he was to forget the gas! There was gas, of course, to supplement the electric lights. He

struck a match, and after turning on the gas, applied the burning taper to the jet. No light. The gas also was cut off. He had plenty of matches. He struck another. The *Diurnal* extra lay on the desk where he had left it. He twisted it into a taper and lighted it.

It made quite a blaze. He could see. On the desk lay a note. Surely it had not been there before the light went out. It was a yellow envelope framed in red—the colors of Spain. He seized it, opened it.

“You are a prisoner,” it read, “until you choose to sign the inclosed paper giving your entire fortune to Señora Isabella——”

“Well, I’m damned!” he exclaimed.

The paper burned out and he was again in darkness.

"Never," he shouted. He turned in all directions, shouting, "Never, never!"

He thought he heard a soft laughter and another click in the wall. Perhaps it was only his overwrought imagination and the darkness.

However, he would prove to himself that he was a philosopher. He would undress and go to bed. He had not dined. He forgot that fact. He went to bed—and he slept.

In the morning when he awoke he laughed, thought he had had a nightmare. There were his coffee and rolls on the table beside him and also the morning papers.

"What an ass I've been," he said, "to go on like that last night. Isabel, the devil, isn't devil enough to carry out this game to the end."

He was ravenously hungry. In grief, youth does not lose its appetite. Señor Don Alphonso de Castro was not a day over twenty-five.

He turned to the morning papers. The first two names in the big spread-heads that caught his eye were those of Anita Verona and—Holy Virgin! his own name. “Great triumph of the Cuban heroine at Madison Square Garden,” he read. “Ten thousand people flocked to see the young girl rescued from the Ceuta convict colony by Richard Van West, the *Diurnal* correspondent.” Next to this he read, “Strange disappearance of Don Alphonso de Castro, Spanish-American merchant prince, society leader and clubman. Last seen of the don was when he started for the reception to Señorita Verona at Madison Square

Garden. Señora de Castro grief-stricken. Foul play feared. A score of detectives on case."

The don laughed, roared. Great joke! "Señora de Castro grief-stricken!" Oh, it was very funny!

Well, why did not the detectives search a man's own house occasionally when the man is missing?

Don Alphonso got up and dressed. He went to the windows. He would open them and shout till some one heard him. As he opened the window something struck his hand away and an iron shutter shot past him, till it seemed to catch in a lock at the top of the window-case. This devilish design was evidently worked from below. It was apparently intended as a warning to leave the other windows alone unless he wished to have

them also closed by an iron shutter and live in darkness by day as well as by night.

He turned to his desk. Another note lay there. He was now indifferent, but he read the note. It merely said that when he had signed the deeds left there the night before he was to rap heavily three times on the floor.

It would not be interesting to narrate the details of the don's confinement during the next thirty days. Suffice it to say that every night enough food was placed in his room in some mysterious way and the morning *Diurnal* was invariably beside his rolls and coffee. In this newspaper, which to him now appeared the most diabolical engine of modern torture, he read from day to day the triumphant progress of Señorita

Anita Verona, her coffin, her *chaperone*, Lady Bluntly, and her manager, Richard Van West of the *Diurnal*, through the country. From New York to Philadelphia, to Cincinnati, to New Orleans, to San Francisco, and in fact the tour of all the great cities back to Washington. The *Diurnal* further stated that the Cuban heroine had written a book of her adventures which was published by the owner of the paper and that every copy sold would be for the personal benefit of the *señorita*.

The don was tired of prison life, but he would never surrender. "Now I can get some faint idea of what my Anita suffered on my account," he would say to himself. He had two consolations—the photograph of Anita and his library. In the picture he studied his Anita's

features. In the books he studied the art of warfare, the history of rebellions, the uses of strategic military movements, the science of equipment and of rations.

"If only that she-devil would not use my fortune for Spain," he would say, "I would sign, anything to see Anita again, rich or penniless."

The twenty-ninth day came around. On his desk that morning he found another note, again conveyed there in some mysterious way. "The thirtieth day," it said, "is the last. Sign or starve."

"I'll starve," he said as he crumpled the note.

On the thirty-first morning of his confinement, no food awaited him, and no morning *Diurnal*. On the thirty-second

morning, no food, no paper. On the morning of the thirty-fourth day he got up, but fell back again on the bed, exhausted.

Lack of food was telling upon him. His strength was gone. He was too weak to stand up.

On the thirty-fifth day, while lying partially dressed on his bed, he thought he heard a crumbling noise in the adjoining library. He fell from the bed to his knees and dragged himself in to see what was taking place. He saw the deeds lying open and ready on the desk. With his remaining strength he tore them into shreds.

At the same time was a sharp click in the wall—somewhere, where? Another click—this time he located the sound. It seemed to come from behind the

panel picture of Señora Isabella. The panel turned. There was a rush of air. Some one stood in the space left vacant by the open panel. It was Anita.

CHAPTER VI.

ALPHONSO, on his knees by the desk, stretched out his arms toward the apparition standing on that mysterious threshold. His body trembled, his arms shook as if with the palsy.

“Anita!” The cry was like that of a hungry wolf. “My Anita!” The cry this time was the shriek of a despairing soul.

His arms dropped, he fell prone on the floor, where he lay still and silent as if dead.

The beautiful Cuban stood as if petrified. Evidently she had not expected to see Alphonso, her lover of former days, looking like one of the reconcentrados of

Cuba. Only when Alphonso fell to the floor did she move—nay, she flew—to his side. She knelt by him, leaned over him, kissed his pale, cold lips, kissed his sightless eyes, pushed back the thick black hair and kissed his handsome brow. And she whispered: “My husband!”

Then as if actuated by more practical thoughts, she laid her hand over his heart—it beat. She put her cheek close to his lips—he breathed.

“My God! What have they done to him?” she murmured. She was calm though her face was contorted with anguish. “My Alphonso, my sweetheart, what have they done to you? Ah, it is cruel, cruel!”

“Santa Maria!” she went on, “something dreadful has happened to him!

What is it? Alphonso, love, wake—see—your Anita calls you.”

She shook him. He gave no sign of awakening. She lifted his head, cushioned it on her bosom, all the while murmuring love words.

“They told me you had disappeared,” she cried; “that perhaps you were murdered. Ah, you have indeed suffered! But what shall I do? Something—quickly.”

She laid his head down again tenderly. Then springing up, she made a hurried inspection of the rooms. There was the broken door, the iron barrier, the oaken chair lying upside down, and the breach in the wall by which she had entered; on one side of the library was the bathroom and on the other the bedroom. Rushing back to the unconscious man

she gathered him into her arms and carried him bodily into the sleeping-room, where she laid him gently on the bed. Anita's arms had lost none of the strength which had been her protecting power in Ceuta, her island prison.

What next? Anita looked around, quivering like a hunted animal. She must think quickly. Her beauty, heightened at this moment by excitement, was dazzling. She was not now the half-starved, half-naked Anita of Ceuta. She was now the *Señorita Maria Anita Verona*, the greatest beauty and richest heiress of Cuba. The beauty, it seemed, they could not take from her. Her riches they had pilfered. But for one person and a rich newspaper she would now have been as poor and as badly off, so far as worldly goods were concerned,

as one of the reconcentrados of Cuba. The person who had helped her was Dick West. The newspaper, whose love of notoriety and extravagance had made her modestly independent, was the New York *Diurnal*. She was dressed now in the fashion of the day, and looked more as if she had come direct from Paris than from the penal colony of Ceuta. Her hair turned in high waves back from the forehead after the manner of the Spanish. She wore furs—though at the first glance one could see that the furs were only a temporary part of her toilette; for her figure, her skin, her eyes, her manner, her gestures told that she was born to the mantilla.

She looked down again at the unconscious Alphonso.

What next? Ah! Call somebody, a

doctor, any one. As she started to leave room she heard him call faintly:

“Anita!”

She turned back, bent over him. “Alphonso, are you awake?”

“Anita,” he again said faintly. “Food.”

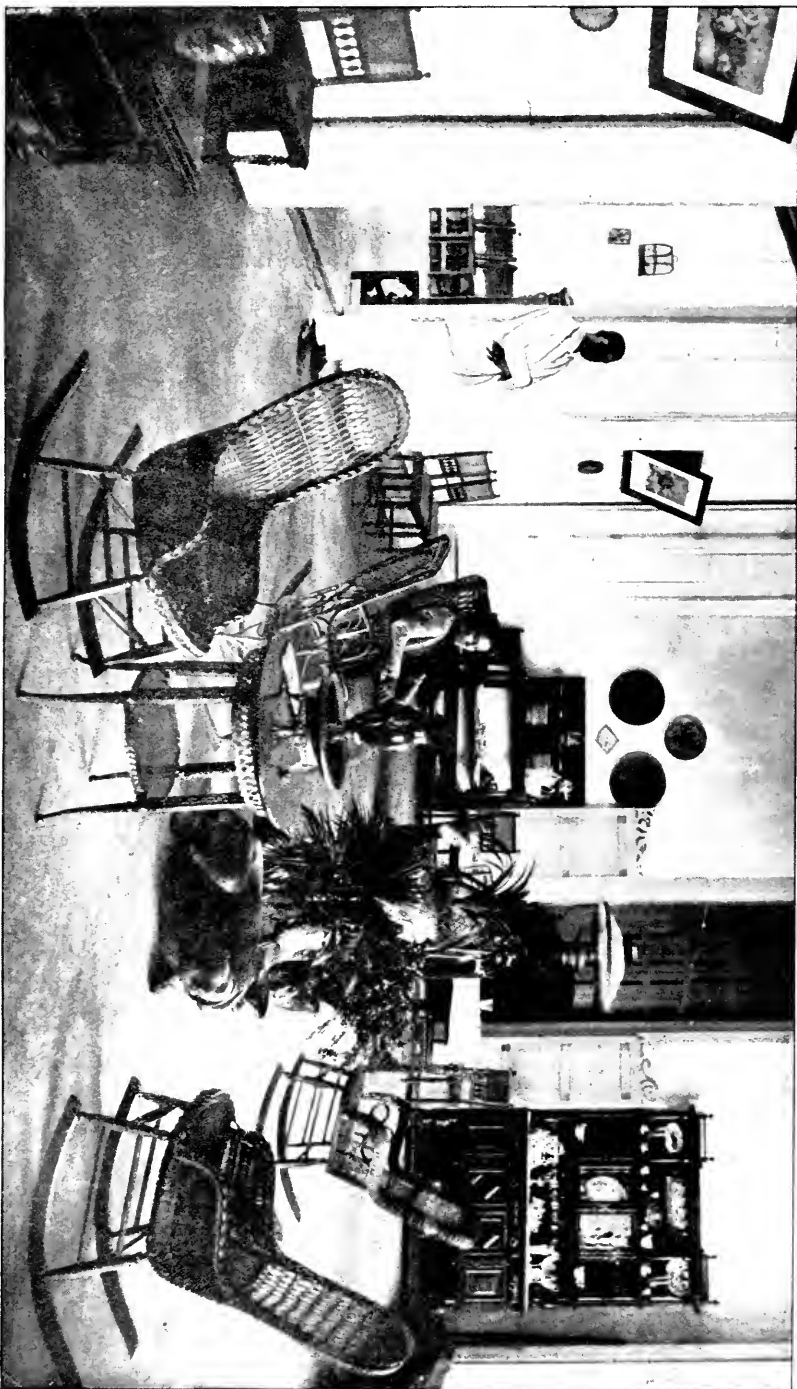
“Yes, yes, food, at once,” she said excitedly.

“Drink,” the man whispered.

“Yes, Alphonso, and drink. Ah, the drink I can bring at once. And she rushed into the dressing-room, coming back immediately with a crystal goblet of water. She put the glass to his lips, pouring slowly till the last drop was gone.

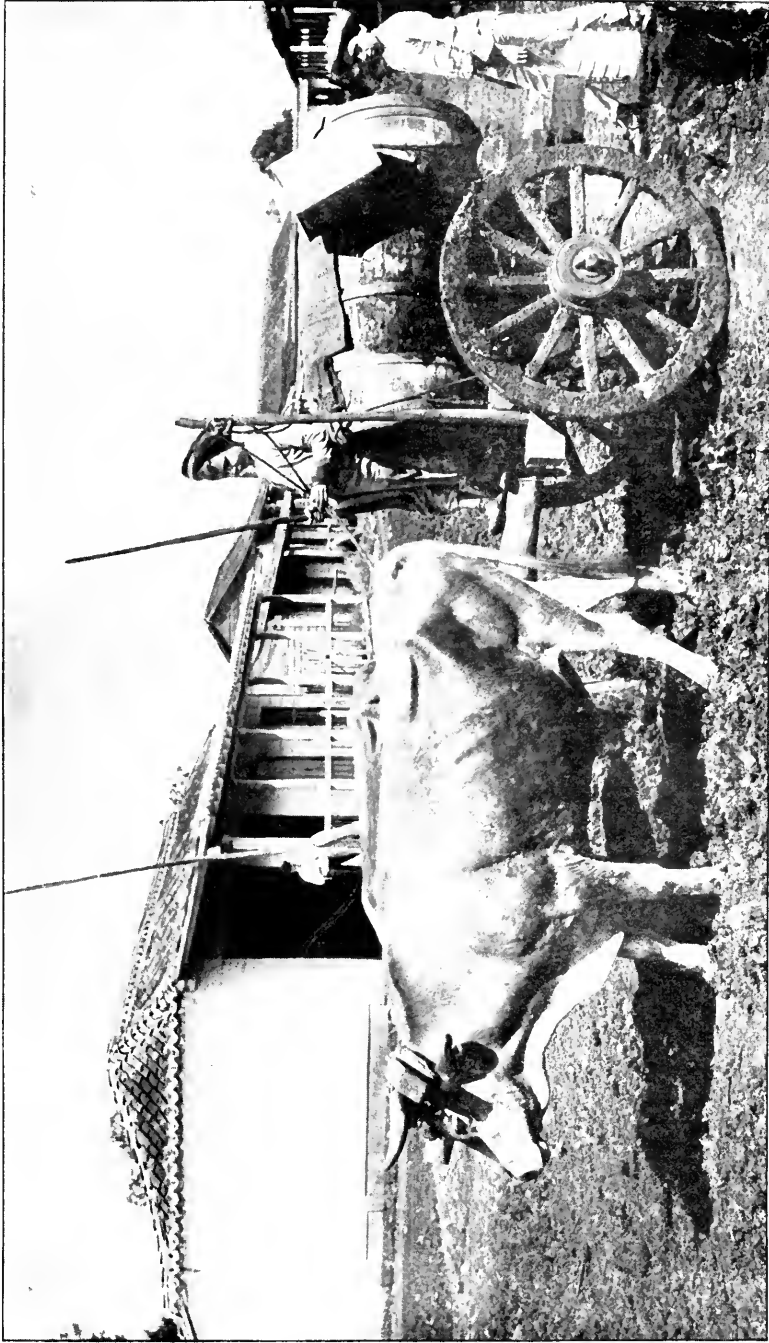
Alphonso smiled. “Angel,” he said, in stronger tones.

“And now I will run for food,” she



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A typical parlor in the house of a Cuban family of the middle class in Havana, showing servant in the doorway. La Señora sits in her inevitable rocking chair where she spends her days rocking, always rocking.



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On the outskirts of Havana. Boys selling water. In the early morning they charge five cents a can; at noon, three cents. The can is shown hanging in the water barrel. The owner of a cart has to take out a vender's license the same as the candy man and the breakfast carrier.

said, bending over him, her face close to his.

He opened his eyes, and as if acquiring sudden strength he lifted his arms about her and scrutinized her face minutely. "My Anita, how beautiful you are—even after—even after—Ceuta. Anita, they have been starving me. No, don't go yet for food. I am starving, yes. But for the sight of you, for your touch, for your words. See, I am strong," and he sat up. "Anita," he said very solemnly, "you will not believe me, but I love you as I loved you in the long ago—for I have never ceased loving you."

She moved back just a step. "You must not talk so," she said, her voice husky. "Save those words for—your wife."

"My wife!" he exclaimed, clinching

his fist. "My wife! You mean my she-devil, my—good God! and have they told you she is my wife? Ah, of course, of course. How could I expect otherwise? We lived together. People thought her my wife. And I believed you dead, dead. She told me you were shot in Pinar del Rio, after a battle, as a spy. That devil told me. She led me on. I became infatuated. I mistook the infatuation for love. I am innocent, though you believe me guilty of betraying you to Spain and sending you to Ceuta. Anita—my beautiful Anita—do you, do you hate me?"

"No, Alphonso, I do not hate you. And I do not trust you. Can I—after what has happened? Listen!" and she bent over him and whispered to him about the baby boy who was born in

Ceuta, and who was torn from her breast and thrown into the sea by those cruel Spanish soldiers.

She noticed that the news was having its effect, that he was losing strength again. And she felt that she had chosen the wrong time to tell him; that she should have waited until she had brought him food. "But never mind, never mind now," she added hurriedly, "you must have food. Alphonso! Let me go. What do you mean? I must bring help—you are mad."

The don indeed was acting like a raving maniac. He had pulled her down and was pressing her to him with a strength of which she had not suspected him capable. "Is it true? Is it true?" he kept asking. At the same time he sprang from the bed and dragged her

into the library and over to the breach in the wall made by the open panel. He turned it, it turned as if on a pivot, until it was closed and again formed part of the wall. At the same time Anita heard a sharp click—as if the panel had locked itself into place.

No sooner was the painting of the Donna Isabella before them than the don attacked it with his finger nails, his fists, even with his teeth. He scratched at it in an attempt to rip it from the wall. The canvas, however, was too strong for mere finger-nails. He needed a knife. Searching for a weapon he seized a huge and formidable paper cutter from the desk. With it he again attacked the painting furiously, plunging the knife into the canvas directly in the place where, if the figure had been of flesh

and blood, the heart would certainly have been pierced. Stepping back and viewing his handiwork, he burst into maniacal laughter.

Then possessed by another thought, he seized Anita by the arm. "Anita, who was the officer who gave that command—the command to throw our child to the sharks?"

"Alphonso, you are mad. Come, lie down and I will go for food and help."

"His name, I say, his name!" shrieked the suffering man.

"Lieutenant Casses," Anita said. "But come——"

"Ah, Lieutenant Casses—Anita, do you think I shall forget that name? No—and when I meet Lieutenant Casses——"

"Alphonso, he is dead."

"Dead?"

“Yes. I killed him. I stepped over his dead body to freedom.”

Alphonso was now looking from Anita to the panel, and from the panel back again to Anita.

“Tell me,” he said excitedly, “how did you get here? How did you find me?”

“I followed your—I mean the Donna Isabella. I arrived in New York this morning. That newspaper was through with me for the present. It made for me lots of money. Every word it printed about me was a lie—but by doing bad, it accomplished good. It supplied me with money—with the money I shall give to help Cuba Libre. This morning my tour ended. I was in that big hotel they call the Walford Inn. He was with me, Señor Van West—

what is it they call him? Ah, yes, Mr. Dick. I was with Dick. A woman, a queen, as regal as she was beautiful, passed through the corridor. Dick said: 'That is the famous Donna Isabella de Castro. Her husband, Don Alphonso de Castro, disappeared about a month ago—believed to have met with foul play.' He did not need to tell me who that woman was, for I knew her. Only now she bore your name. Trembling, I feared I could not stand up. Something in that beautiful woman's bearing told me you were not dead; that she knew where you were. If she loved you, she could never act like that, under the grief of your disappearance. I said to Dick, 'Excuse me.' I left him and rushed after the woman I believed to be your wife. She entered a coupé. I jumped

into a hansom and told the driver to follow the coupé. She drove up the avenue, and entered this house. A few moments later I tried the street door. It was open and I entered. The house was dark. I groped about, climbed stairs and more stairs. I stepped on something; it was a loose tile. It clicked, and light came into the hall through that place where the picture is and——”

“And now,” Alphonso said, “the hall is dark again and we are here, and here *to stay and to starve.*” And again the young man laughed like a madman.

“Alphonso, what do you mean?” said Anita.

“I mean that there is no way out; that I have made you a prisoner. I mean we are *locked in like mice in a trap.*” And Alphonso then told Anita all that

had taken place in that room since the night he had dressed to go to Madison Square Garden, to see if the *Diurnal's* heroine was really his Anita.

He told her everything, from the discovery of the iron barrier to the tearing up of the deeds they had tried to force him to sign.

As he proceeded with the story the don's voice had been growing weaker and still weaker. Anita, noticing his failing strength, had begged him to stop, to tell her the appalling story later. But he continued even to the end of his story and—to the end of his strength. He fell into a chair while talking, and he pointed to the bits into which he had torn the deed. It was the climax of his tale, and his strength entirely left him. He lay back in his chair unconscious.

Again gathered him in her arms, she carried him into the sleeping-room and laid him on the bed as before.

“Now — to act,” she murmured. “Merciful Father! I must get out of here. I must bring help. He will die. That panel is probably opened by a secret spring in this room as well as in the hall. I must find the spring.”

The floor was of hard wood, inlaid in fancy designs. She began by stamping on each particular bit with her heel, hoping, thinking that perhaps the panel was opened in this way—by stepping on a certain piece of hard wood the result would be the same as stepping upon the loose tile in the hall. As there were hundreds of pieces of wood, the work took longer than she had anticipated. While patiently trying each particular

block of wood, darkness came and she was obliged to stop. She now began groping about the wall, pressing here, there, everywhere in the hope of finding some sort of secret spring. Hours passed. Hungry and tired and faint, she found a chair and sank into it despairing.

Click! A slight but sharp sound, like the turning of a lock. She felt fresh air rushing into the room and heard a rustling. She could not mistake the sound. It was the swish-swish of silken skirts. Anita held her breath. A figure swept by her and into the sleeping-room. Anita sprang up, tiptoed softly across the room, careful to avoid making the least sound. She reached the bedroom door just in time to see a woman strike a match and hold it so the light fell upon the face of the unconscious man.

It was the Donna Isabella.

"Dead, dead," she whispered hoarsely.

The whisper reached Anita's ears. She saw the donna lean over Alphonso, kiss him, and then burst into a flood of tears. The match, still flickering, fell upon the bed-blanket. The light slightly increased. The donna, with her head buried in her arms, weeping, did not see it. The tiny flame crept along the blanket, snake-like, spread, and suddenly became a broad flame. The donna, looking up affrighted, saw first the burning blanket, and then, in its light, the face which she hated more than anything on earth, the face which she dreaded more than any of the tortures of hell—the dark face of Anita Verona.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Spanish woman was startled, visibly agitated. She remained kneeling.

The Cuban girl showed all the superiority of calmness and self-possession. With a lightning-like movement she gathered the burning blanket into a solid ball, extinguishing the fire.

They were again in utter darkness.

Still kneeling, the donna felt the fingers of a strong, warm hand close about her throat. She instantly gained her presence of mind and with a powerful upper blow struck away the murderous hand. At the same time she sprang to her feet.

"I have heard of your skill at strangling," she said, in her native language. "So I, too, am worthy of your dexterity. I am honored. But at the present moment you are not dealing with Señor Casses."

In the darkness Anita could have showed signs of surprise or alarm without fear of detection. She probably had neither of these feelings, for she made this commonplace remark:

"Is there not some means of having light here? Before I settle my account with you I would like to have one good look at a creature so hideous."

"I turned off all the light here, from downstairs, long ago," the donna replied. "I am sorry, though, for I would like, just once, to see you in all your ugliness."

Just then something happened—something so strangely opportune that it seemed miraculous. The room was flooded with light.

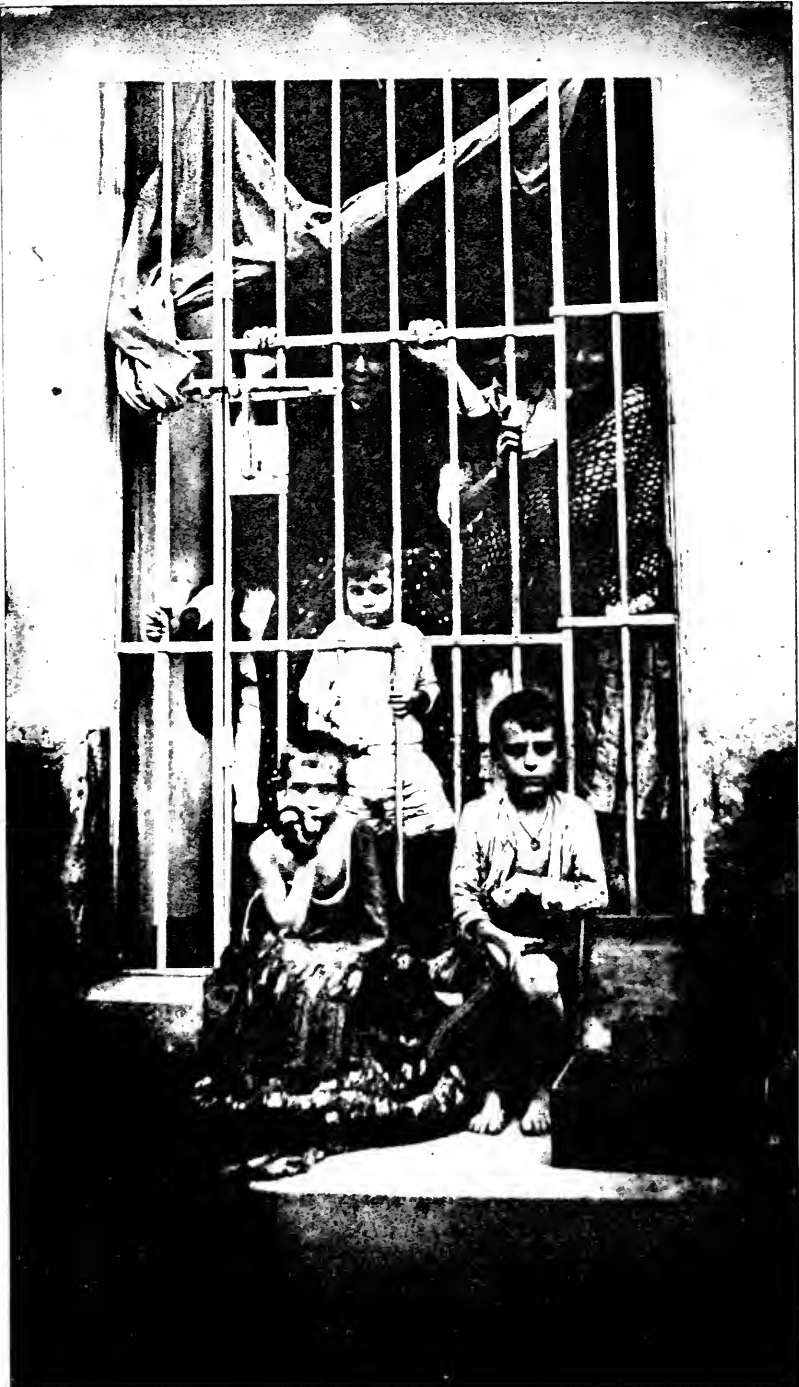
“Some one is in the house,” cried Donna Isabella. “They have turned on the current.” And she rushed from the sleeping-room into the library, swinging the panel round till it clicked, indicating that it was locked. When she turned again she found the Cuban girl facing her.

Each looked the other over from head to foot, the Spanish woman’s face full of jealousy and hatred, the Cuban’s full of indescribable contempt. Each saw that the other was perfectly gowned and strikingly beautiful. Between women, a mutual recognition of this sort is the beginning of hate under any circum-

stances. How much greater is that hatred when the women in question are rivals and enemies!

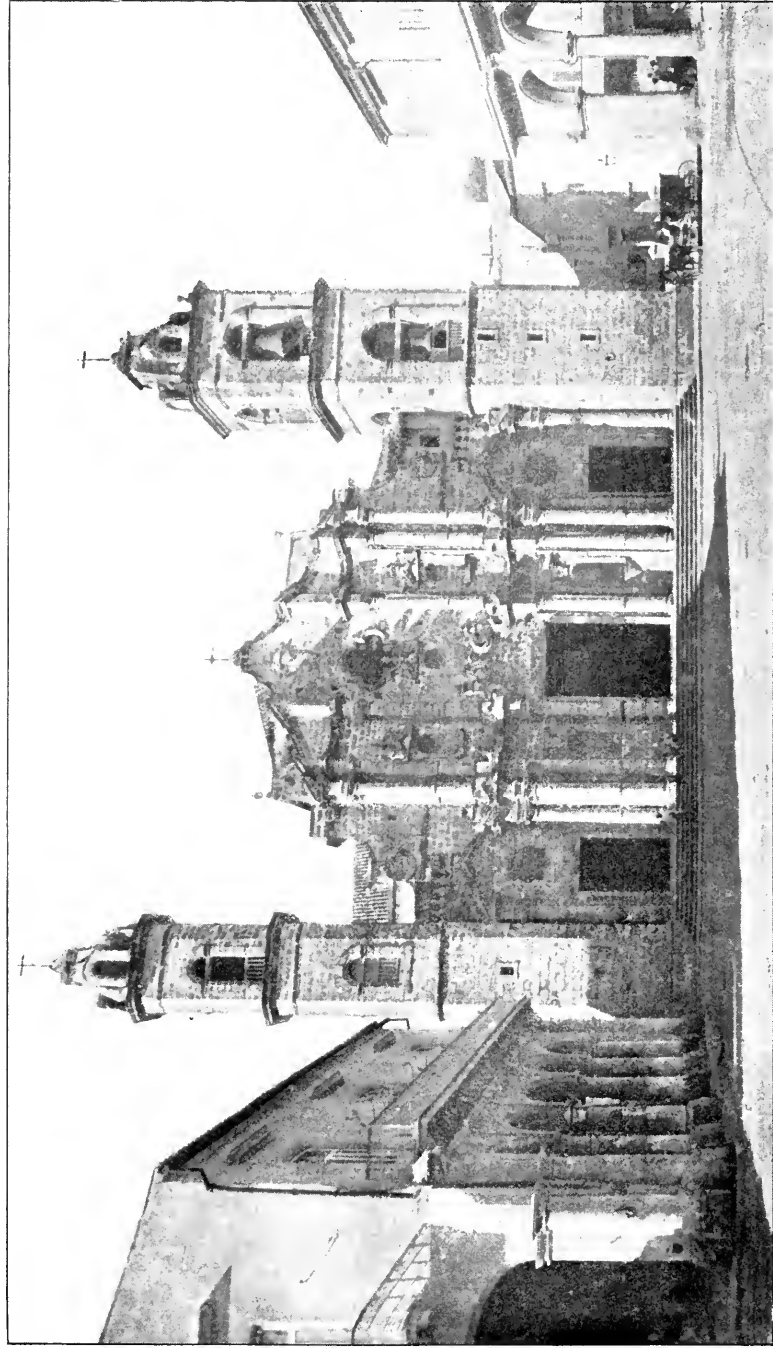
Isabella folded her arms proudly. Anita rested her hands on her hips with arms akimbo saucily.

"Now," began Isabella, "now that there is plenty of a—electric light, suppose we settle that account you spoke of. But first, let me tell you that some one is searching this house. There is a certain wire connected with the dynamo by which every room in the house can be lighted at once. Hence this flood of light. You are in my power. Don Alphonso has been missing for more than a month. I have but to leave this room and fly. You will be found here by the searching party alone with a dead or dying man. The searching party—de-



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In the streets of Havana. Cuban family of lower class at window



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Havana Cathedral, centre of town, where funeral of Maine martyrs was held. A crumbling building two hundred years old, revered by the Cubans.

tectives probably—will soon break into this room through that iron door. Now, my professional strangler, how will you account for your presence here?”

“By detaining you,” Anita said, “and telling the authorities of your diabolical method of compelling Don Alphonso to sign over his fortune to you.”

Meanwhile, Isabella's eyes had been resting on a pair of dueling swords which hung on the wall. “Detain me?” she said; with a questioning inflection. “Well, yes—if I do not detain you. Here! I am not an adept at strangling. Let us fight with weapons we both understand.”

And going to the wall she took down the dueling swords and removed the buttons from their points. Handing one of the weapons to Anita, she said:

“Your skill with this little toy you have already shown. I believe it was you who ran the governor of the Isle of Pines through the body, for which you were tried and sent to Centa for life. Let us reason a moment. You conspired against the government of Spain. With your harlot beauty you ingratiated yourself into favor with the Spanish generals in Havana. You allowed them to make love to you—perhaps your favors extended further. Having obtained secret information of state importance, you carried the information to the insurgents, making of yourself a news-bag. For this you were arrested and sent to the Isle of Pines—for general conspiracy against the Spanish government. While you basked in the favor of the Spanish officers you got them to teach you the

use of the sword. At the Isle of Pines you applied that knowledge to a practical purpose. You lured the governor of the island to your bedroom and there, under the pretense of self-defense, you ran a convenient sword through his heart. For that murder you were tried and sent to the penal colony of Ceuta—for life. Now, my little escaped convict, since then I have had a little sword practice myself. I shall give you an opportunity to run that weapon through another heart—‘in self-defense.’ ”

And Isabella threw herself into the attitude known to fencers as “on guard.”

Anita, playing indifferently with her blade, said calmly: “No words you can utter, Donna Isabella, can insult me. I refuse to fight with you, for I should unquestionably kill you.”

“Ah, you prefer strangling,” cried Isabella, coming again to a natural position and bending her sword in front of her like a riding whip. “But perhaps I have other arguments to make you fight. Anyway, we must hurry, for whoever is searching this house will soon be here. Perhaps you will be pleased to know that it was through my efforts and my influence—which among the Spanish officers happened to be greater than yours—that you were sent to the Isle of Pines and ultimately to Ceuta. I was older than you, my inconstant little butterfly, and I had a trick or two of which you knew nothing. I wanted you out of the way, first, because you were an enemy of Spain, and second because you were a friend of Don Alphonso de Castro. Well, I got you out of the way.

I made your friend, the don, a Spanish subject and a Spanish woman's husband."

"You mean, instead" put in Anita quietly, "that the don made you *his mistress*."

The donna laughed. "You thought that little thrust would tease me, perhaps anger me, didn't you? Well, Anita, the point was not sharp enough. Yes, the don took me *after he had cast you off*. Come, we have no time to spare. I see that you are impatient to kill me. Let us begin."

"Just a moment," said Anita, refusing to raise her sword. "You say you are older than I. You hardly need tell any one that—it is quite glaringly apparent. Indeed, when you are dowdy and toothless and wizened and forgotten—a time

not so far distant—I shall still have years and years left, in which to hear the don say, ‘Anita, I love you.’ For remember this, señora, I know that you are not the donna and that the don will turn from Spain and Isabella to Cuba and Anita. You have said that, because of your old age, you know a trick or two of which my youthfulness is ignorant. Well, the immediate future will prove whether you know tricks enough to defeat my plans.”

“Your plans!” sneered Isabella. “As if your plans were not known to me, and the don’s, too! There is a very pretty fleet of seven vessels belonging to him, now taking on mysterious cargoes at Key West. Perhaps he will say they are cargoes of provisions and medicines for the reconcentrados. And per-

haps the Spanish generals will say something else. Hark!"

They heard men's voices in the hall behind the iron door.

"This is the last moment for either you or me," said Isabella. "But remember, if you survive now, that by going to Cuba, by raising your hand against Spain you seal your doom. Your fate will be something worse than a thousand dreadful deaths and still something less than death itself. Now, fight—or kill me in self-defense, as you have killed before." And Isabella, taking the proper fencing position, made a feint at Anita's heart.

With a single flash of her blade, Anita struck Isabella's weapon away.

The desperate woman made, not another feint, but a thrust, a lunge. It was a mad, murderous onslaught, such

as only a woman would make. The point touched Anita and bent upward. It had come in contact with the steel of her corset, which served the purpose of a cuirass.

"There's no time to take off our armor," said Isabella, preparing to make another lunge. "Even corsets have their vulnerable points," and she made a very scientific and very dangerous thrust at her rival and enemy.

This time the point really found a vulnerable place in Anita's corsets, for she felt the tip of the blade enter her body just below the left breast. Had she chosen she could then and there have killed Isabella. Instead she struck the señora's weapon a sudden and peculiar blow which made the blade fly in one direction and the hilt in the

other. The señora was disarmed. Her sword lay in pieces in two corners of the room.

The men in the hall had begun breaking down the iron door. The noise of their pounding was deafening.

The señora rushed into the sleeping-room, closing the door after her and locking it, just as Anita reached it, in pursuit.

At the same time there was a deafening crash on the opposite side of the room. The iron-door had given way.

From the door that locked her away from the poor, unconscious don, Anita turned—turned into the arms of Dick Van West.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK kissed Anita and pressed her to him. Then releasing her, he begged ten thousand pardons, meant it only in a brotherly way, of course; but he was so glad to find her. He had been hunting all day. Got two detectives from headquarters, tracked her, and, "Here we are," he ended. "But, good heavens, Anita, what's this—blood? Look! See here, men, she is wounded. She's been stabbed. She's faint. She's losing control. Good heavens, look at that broken sword! And here's another sword, a whole one. There's been a fight. Secure the weapons as evidence. One of you fellows bring a doctor, the other

knock that door down—the door she was trying to open as we entered.”

One of the detectives had already rushed away for a physician. The other proceeded to break the lock of the door leading into the sleeping-room.

Dick had led Anita to a sort of lounge, where she now lay, quite unconscious. He opened her garments and fixed first his handkerchief and then a towel over the wound, and thus to some extent checked the bleeding.

“Anita, Anita,” he whispered, “I love you, I love you.”

“No, you don’t,” she said faintly, but smilingly.

Just then the detective, having broken the door open, and entered the room, came back to Dick, saying, “As we told you, this is the house of the missing

Don de Castro. We have found him. He is in there, on the bed, conscious, but in a starving condition. He asks only, 'Where is my Anita? Where is my wife?' "

Anita heard and smiled again.

Dick looked surprised, then foolish.

"You are right," he said, whispering to her. "Guess I don't love you, after all. But I am fearfully fond of you, though. You are a wonderful girl. Now, how did you know that I didn't love you before I realized it myself? Guess I love Daisy; yes, Daisy's the girl I really love. But say, Anita, you're wounded or dying, or something like that. Tell me all about it--no, not now, here comes the doctor.

"Who is Daisy?" asked Anita.

"Daisy? Oh, she's just Daisy Van

Holland. Oh, she is to me what he—you know;" and Dick pointed significantly to the room where the don lay.

Dick did not know until a few moments ago that Anita had ever even heard of the don. But he was used to "sizing up life histories," as he expressed it.

"Well," he continued, "Daisy is going with us—on the yacht—you know—to Cuba."

Anita shook her head.

"What," said Dick, "don't want to go now? Backed out? Cause of Cuba N. G.?"

Anita was pointing to the sleeping-room.

"Ah, I see. Not until he, that starving fellow in there, has a few good square meals. I see—attachment to a married man—he's married, you know. I showed

you his donna at the Walford Inn. Oh, but isn't she a stunner! Well, this is a queer game—I don't understand it yet—but I'll tell Daisy the trip's postponed till all hands get a clean bill of health."

Meanwhile, two doctors had come in with the detective. One examined the don and reported that he would be as well as ever in one week.

The other took charge of Anita and reported only a flesh wound—would heal within a few days.

Dick had his own way of bossing things. He ordered Anita taken at once to the New York house of Lord and Lady Bluntly. He also ordered the report to be made that she was merely suffering from the result of overstrain during her recent trip across the continent.

Till further information could be secured, he said he would write up this "beat" for his own paper, the *Diurnal*: Richard Van West, the *Diurnal* correspondent, had found the missing Don Alphonso unconscious and in a starving condition, locked in his own apartment at the De Castro mansion on upper Fifth Avenue. All means of egress were barricaded with iron doors. The don regained consciousness long enough to say he knew not who was responsible for the treatment he had received. That Donna Isabella de Castro had likely departed for Cuba to look after his immense business interests. He then relapsed into insensibility and is now under the care of two physicians. The De Castro mansion has been closed ever since a few days after the disappearance

of the don. Donna Isabella de Castro has been stopping at the Walford Inn, where she was last seen the morning previous to the discovery of the imprisoned Don Alphonso.

“Now, we will keep all other reporters away from the don while you doctors fatten him up—and when I learn the truth about this mysterious affair I’ll write it up to suit myself.”

A coach was sent for, and Anita, leaning on Dick’s arm, bravely descended the stairs. As they drove across the park to Lady Bluntly’s house Anita said:

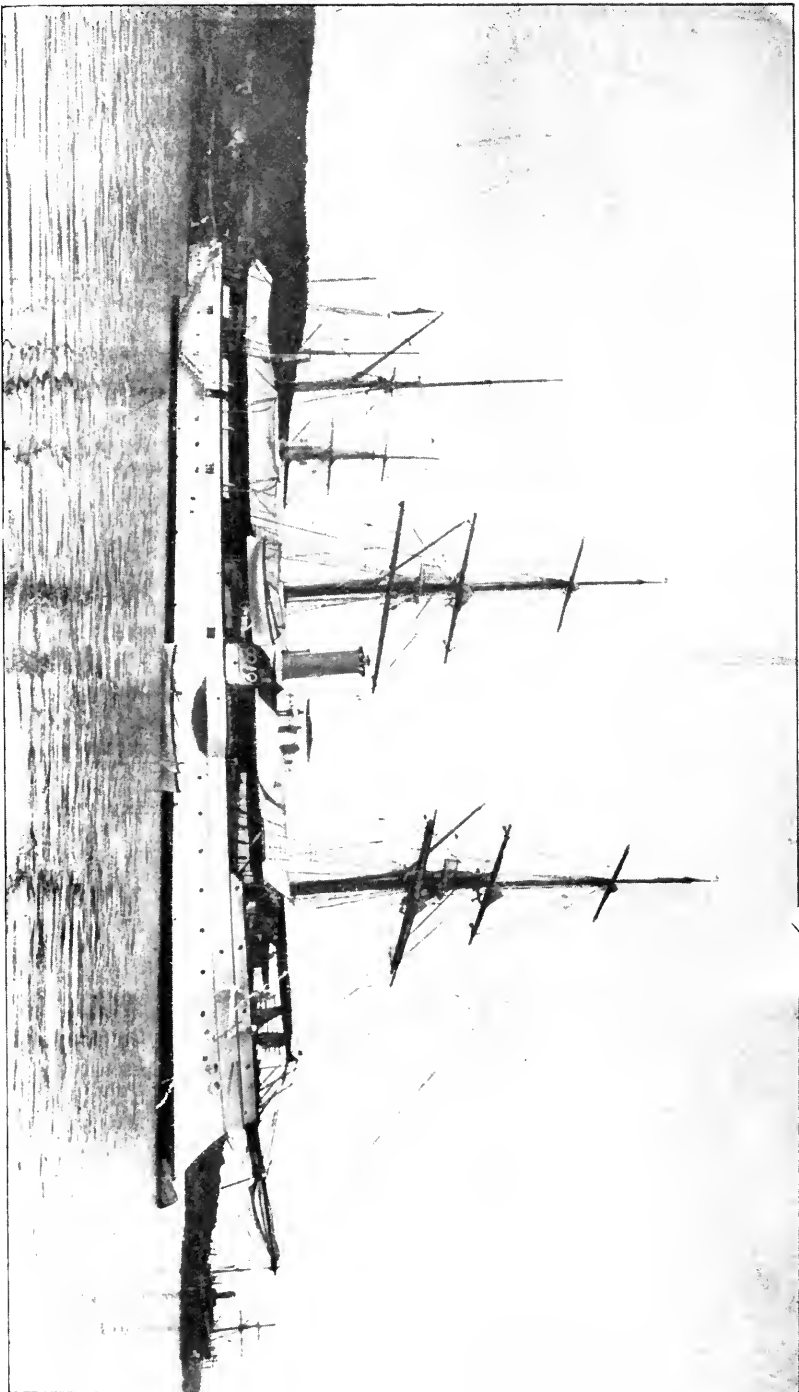
“Dick—Mr. Van West—was the donna—the señora—with him—with the don?”

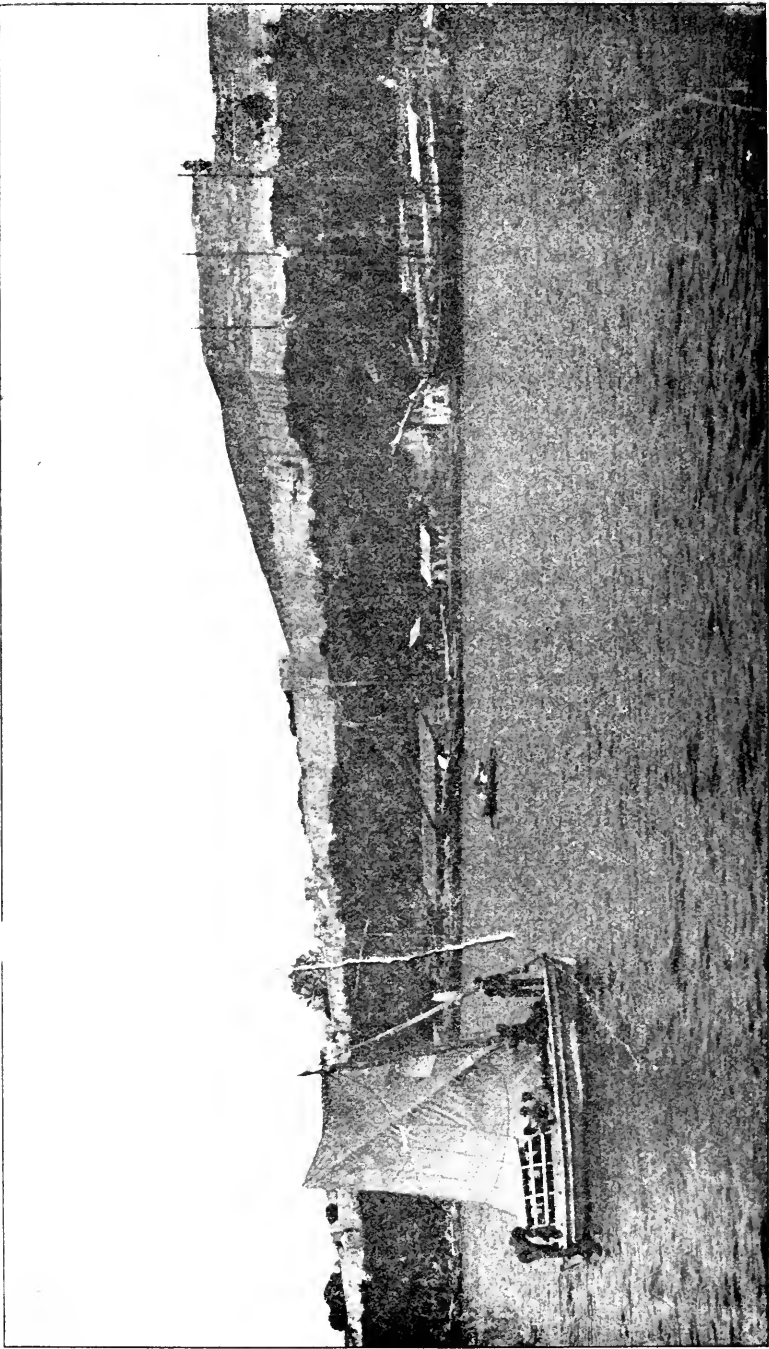
“The señora? Why, no! Didn’t see her. Why?”

“Oh, nothing. She knows a trick or

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Spanish Gunboat in the Harbor of Havana.





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Havana. View of Fort Cabanas. The political prison. Behind these impenetrable walls hundreds of political prisoners are incarcerated, cut off from the world as utterly as Siberian exiles.

two. She knows especially the secret passages of that weird old house."

A week later Señorita Maria Anita Verona, convalescent, her wound healed, the fever gone, lay on a divan in the Moorish room at Lady Bluntly's house on West End Avenue. Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly were out. Anita was alone.

A servant entered and presented a card—Señor Don Alphonso de Castro.

Anita, turning slightly pale, arose. "Show him in here," she said.

Any one watching the Cuban girl at that moment would have known that she loved the man whose coming she now awaited.

The don appeared, tall, dark, handsome as ever, though his cheeks were

yet somewhat hollow and his eyes sunken, and underrimmed with black circles.

He embraced Anita after the fashion of the Spanish.

His first words were, "Anita, I have been thinking it all over. Let us forget the past—or rather, let us forget the horrible and remember only the beautiful. Anita, I love you. I want you to marry me, to become my wife—at once."

Anita started, staggered. Then she nerved herself and said: "No, Alphonso. You thought you loved me—Ah, was it only two years ago or was it two centuries? Did you really love me then? Your actions did not prove your words. Now you again say you love me. This time you must prove it."

"I will," said the don fervently.
"Name the proof."

"Give your services, your wealth and, if need be, your life to free Cuba—then I will believe that you love me."

"Anita, I was prepared for this. See how calm I am. I had already decided to break with the Spanish villains who have been bleeding me for two years; but why drag in that harrowing history? Isabella fascinated me and she knew it. She lied to me and she gloried in it. She has brought dishonor on herself and has opened my eyes to her machinations. But, Anita, there are other places than New York. No one in Cuba knows that Isabella lived with me here as my wife. You and I can go to Havana and live always happily. Oh, dear, say you love me, that you will marry me—at once."

“No, Alphonso,” Anita said, hardly able to speak the words. “No! As I said, I do not, cannot trust you—after what has happened. You must give me the proof of your love—the proof I have asked.”

“And if I do, Anita, if I do, shall I then have my reward, the fulfillment of my dream?”

“Alphonso, I love you now, as I did then. No, do not touch me. I say no! But when you have proved your love for me—ah—you shall see. Listen; Isabella knows of your ships which are loading at Key West. From what she said, I imagine they are to be seized as filibusters.”

Alphonso's eyes twinkled. “Are they? Good! Exactly what I have foreseen. Ah, wait until we get to

Havana. In trickery, I think Isabella will meet her match in me."

"In three days," Anita said, "we all sail in Sir Charles Bluntly's yacht, the Tramp. Alphonso, on the voyage and afterward—I want you to promise now that you will not speak to me of love or of marriage. For you know that I love you and that I am not so strong as to say no always. Promise me that until you have given me the proof I ask, you will not speak to me excepting as your friend."

Alphonso gave this promise, hesitatingly but earnestly.

They talked for awhile of the past, and suddenly Anita said: "But where do you suppose Isabella is?"

"Where? Where but in Havana, preparing vengeance upon you and me?"

Somewhere in the house they heard an electric bell tinkle, and the next minute Sir Charles, Lady Bluntly, and Dick Van West joined our lover-friends in the Moorish room.

“Shiver my ancestors’ sainted timbers!” exclaimed Sir Charles, after the first greeting. “But that Spanish cad ought to be kicked all the way from Washington to New York, and thence across the Atlantic to his own Madrid. Shiver me! I can’t claim I’m an American, but oh, Lord! my wife’s an American—hey, wifey?”

“Bet your life!” said that very American-mannered lady of title. “Bet your bottom dollar that Spanish prig will do Spanish stunts in the way of getting out of this country on the double-quick.

The idea of writing letters like that about our president!"

"But what is the matter?" exclaimed Don Alphonso. "What's the matter? Who is the guilty Spaniard and what has he done?"

"What has he done?" cried Dick Van West, who had been making notes for newspaper copy on his cuff. "What's he done? Why, don, old boy, that idiot De Lima, the Spanish minister here, wrote a letter to another Spanish villain in Madrid, in which he called our president a political jobber catering to the rabble!—rabble, of course, meaning the American people. Well, sir, the *Diurnal* discovered that letter, photographed and published it. Now the *Diurnal*—oh, we practically run the country, you know—well, now, the *Diurnal* and the United

States government have demanded the recall of Minister de Lima. As a consequence, the said De Lima is packing his portmanteau, with a view to acting at once upon word from Madrid to go home—that is, he knows he is about to get the grand bounce.”

Meanwhile, the baronet, always an excellent host, had sent for a few small bottles. The small bottles having been opened, their sparkling contents were now passed to the various members of the little party sitting in the Moorish room.

“Listen!” shouted Dick Van West.

They all listened, and heard “Extra! Extra!”

Dick leaped from his chair and rushed to the front door. Lady Bluntly, ex-champion newspaper woman of America,

sprang after him and succeeded in snatching one of the extras from the newsboy's hand, while Dick had to stop and pay for the papers.

Rushing back to the Moorish room, Lady Bluntly read the spread-heads, covering the whole front page.

"Minister de Lima recalled. Ordered out of America at once. Demonstrations against Americans in Havana. Second-class battleship Maine, now at Key West, ordered to proceed to Havana for the protection of Americans in that city."

Sir Charles sprang up. "Friends, let us touch glasses and drink," he said. "Let us all drink a bumper to the toast, 'Down with all Spaniards who insult America! Down with Spanish despotism in Cuba! Up with the Cuban flag!'"

They all drained glasses, even the don.

“Now, we’re off,” cried Sir Charles. “The Tramp is in commission; there’s coal in the bunkers and oil on her engines. We sail day after to-morrow—to take to Havana, as our honored passengers, the Don Alphonso de Castro and”—looking at Anita with twinkling eyes—“a certain young Frenchman, Monsieur le Comte de Granville.”

CHAPTER IX.

FOUR days later, in the forenoon, a long, white yacht passed the Sand Key lighthouse, the last of the Florida Keys and the last American soil to be seen before entering Cuban waters, ninety miles distant. The lighthouse keeper had never seen a yacht so large. He put out in his small boat to have a better look at her and to receive the customary package of newspapers which passing vessels very kindly toss to the lighthouse keepers.

The sky was a deep blue, peculiar to the tropics. The sea was as tranquil as a lake and as blue as the sky.

“Ship, ahoy!” yelled the lighthouse

man, as his boat came within hailing distance.

“Ship, ahoy, yourself!” roared a voice from the bridge of the yacht.

“What ship is that?” yelled the man in the small boat.

“Tramp, from New York to Havana, loaded with a human family or two,” roared the voice from the bridge. “Stand ready to receive your newspapers.”

The boatman came as near to the yacht as he dared. He deftly caught a package of papers thrown to him by a sailor standing amidships on the yacht.

“Any news down here?” roared the voice on the bridge.

“The Maine is in Havana Harbor,” shouted the lighthouse keeper, “been there three days. The transport Fern is

on her way from Key West to Havana with relief for the reconcentrados. Seven schooners, suspected of being filibusters, have sailed from Key West—Spanish gunboat on the lookout. Expect to capture filibusters to-night.”

While the boatman shouted the news the yacht had been speeding on and now his voice, in the distance, sounded to those on the yacht only like a song of the sea.

On through the beautiful sea sped the Tramp. The water could be compared to nothing better than to an opal of infinite size. It was full of the brightest shades of blue and green, with dancing tints of pink, yellow and purple. The Sand Key lighthouse was lost to view. That evening they would anchor off Havana.

On board was a very distinguished company. They were assembled aft, under an awning. Sitting in large wicker chairs, they seemed very comfortable. The men were smoking long, fat cigars. Some of the women toyed with delicate, slender cigarettes. Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly were host and hostess of the voyage—owners of the Tramp.

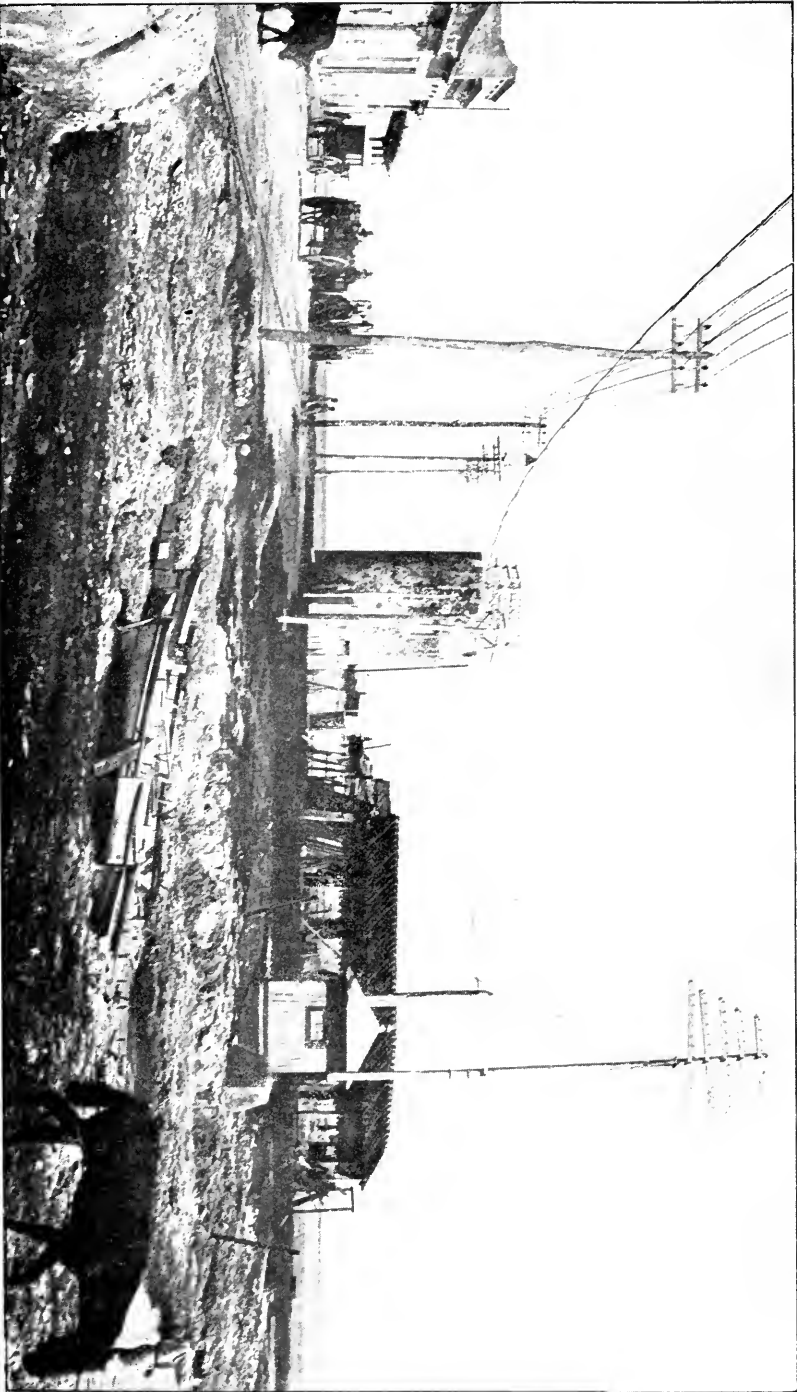
Sir Charles was a subject of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, though his wife was still an out-and-out, thoroughbred American, and recognized only Uncle Sam as protector. As long as the owner of the Tramp was English, the flag of England had floated at the stern. As this was decidedly objectionable to Lady Bluntly, and as Sir Charles never disobeyed his wife, he had, according to

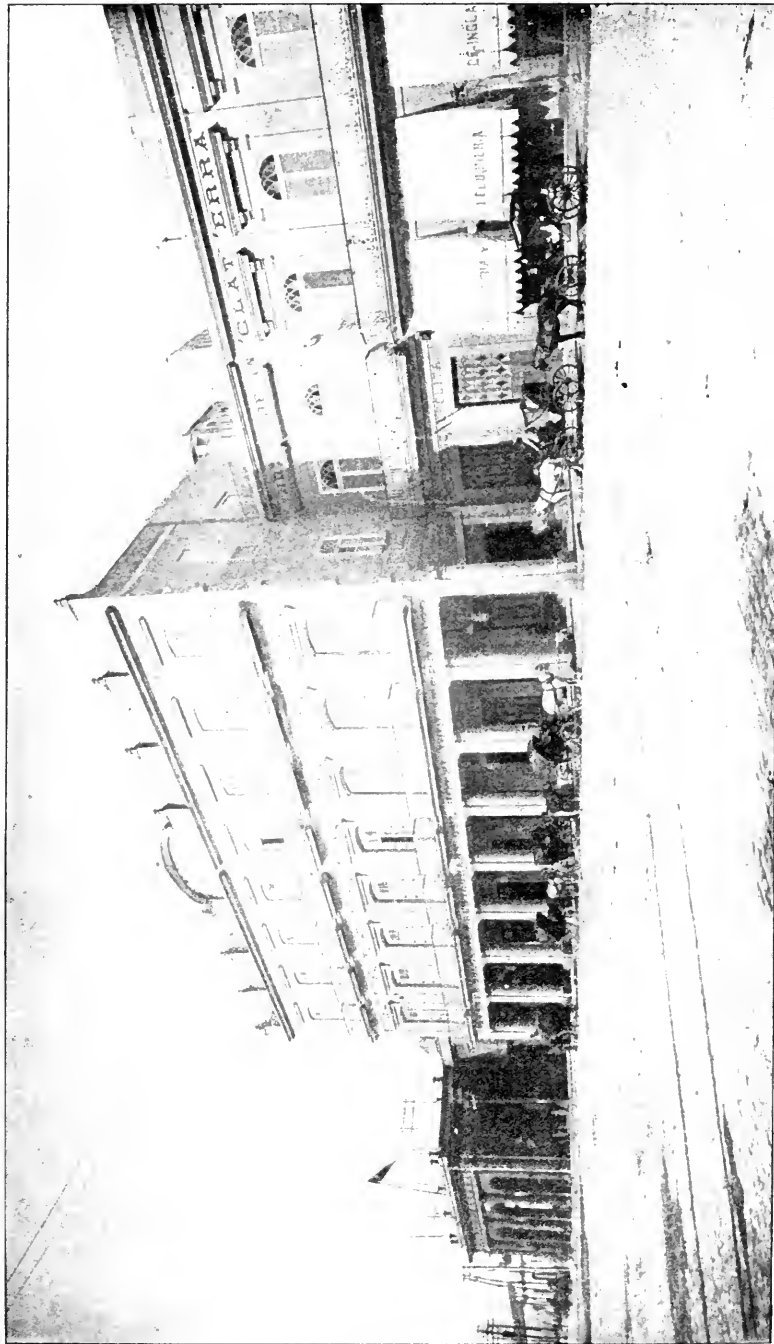
her order, transferred the ownership of the Tramp to her. She had ordered the Stars and Stripes to be floated at her stern. From the mainmast flew the pennant of the New York Yacht Club, of which both Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly were members. On the foremast fluttered the Union Jack.

The guests of Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly were United States Senator and Mrs. Van Holland. The Honorable Van Holland, senator from New York, was going to Cuba ostensibly as tourist, but really to inspect the condition of the island for his government. Mrs. Van Holland, sweet-faced and motherly-looking, had imposed upon herself the mission of visiting the people whom General Weyler had driven from their country homes to starve in the cities. Mrs. Van

Holland meant to help these poor creatures, by gifts of money, and her personal services in the distribution of relief.

A little back of the senator and his wife sat their daughter, Daisy, a young girl as fair and as radiant as a June day. Her head was crowned with a glory of gold, her eyes were as deeply blue as the tropic sky, her skin was like white velvet, and in her face was the faintest suggestion of pink. In tropical climes there were few young girls as fair as she. Therefore she seemed as out of place in that climate of passionate coloring as the olive-skinned Spaniard is amid the breezes and fogs and somber colors of the north. Between her two front upper teeth there was an interstice, a feature which, in some women, would have been





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In the streets of Havana. Inglaterra Hotel, where General Lee and all the correspondents lived. This is the centre of the town, and the picture was taken at two in the afternoon, to show how completely the plaza is deserted during the hours of the siesta.

a blemish. To her, however, that interstice gave an additional charm, a something distinctively characteristic. Her smiles revealed it amid quick gleams of white teeth. At present she was using this little opening as a sort of breach through which she emitted the smoke from her dainty cigarette. She was smiling, and two most irresistible dimples accompanied the smiles.

She was smiling because no one could sit long beside Mr. Richard Van West, of the New York *Diurnal*, and not smile. Most people laughed outright. Miss Daisy, however, did not particularly wish to attract the attention of papa and mamma at this moment, so she repressed her laughter and merely smiled.

Dick was holding the young lady's hand. Indeed he was holding it with a

grasp that was vise-like and therefore lover-like.

“How beautiful your hair is!” he was saying. “Confound it, the rising sun and all such things are not in it with your hair. Talk about bathing in the sunlight—well, I’d be satisfied just to sit and bathe my hand, both hands, in the glorious fairness of your golden ringlets. Say, Day, I love you, hang it! Let’s marry. What’s the use of waiting! We love each other—say, isn’t this a good time to ask the old man—I mean the senator? By Jove, Day, I’ll do it. Here goes.”

And Dick sprang up; putting his hand on his white flannel coat over the place where he supposed his heart to be, he faced the senator, and began: “Dear sir, when, in the course of human events, it

becomes necessary for two young people to——”

“Here comes the señorita, or rather the Count de Granville,” interrupted the senator. “Save your delivery of the declaration of independence till some other time, Van West.”

“Oh, darn the Count de Granville!” protested Dick. “How can I become independent unless I make a declaration? As I was saying: When, in the course of human——”

At this point Dick was again interrupted and the entire party gathered around a young man in a white linen suit and white yachting cap, who had just lounged up lazily. He threw himself into a chair and lighted a cigarette.

“Well done!” exclaimed Dick, temporarily abandoning his declaration.

“Good first appearance,” added the senator.

“A born actor,” said Lady Bluntly.

“Shiver me, but these togs are becoming — deucedly stunning,” said the baronet.

“But your hair, poor child,” said Mrs. Van Holland. “It was so beautiful, so abundant. Were you not sorry to sacrifice it?”

“No sacrifice,” replied the young Frenchman, “is too great that helps Cuba. To help my people, my presence must not become known. To avoid recognition I assume disguise. The Spaniards murdered my father and the shock killed my mother. They put me first in a very bad prison and then sent me to a worse one for life. Then our enemies confiscated all our available

estates. My father, however, left millions invested in the States. The Spanish government has the papers by which the millions can be claimed. Had I remained at Ceuta a few weeks longer I would have had to sign over those papers to Spain, or refusing, die. Is it a wonder that I am willing to risk everything—when I have my father and mother to avenge, my native island to free? In accomplishing these ends I may get possession of the papers by which I can claim my father's millions. The millions, however, are of no value to me, except that with them I can help to allay the distress existing in Cuba. You are all too kind to me; I can never thank——”

“Tut, tut,” interrupted a newcomer, a very dark-skinned young man who had

joined the party in time to hear the Frenchman's last words. "Tut, tut, dear Señorita Anita, I——"

"Sh!" commanded Lady Bluntly, putting her finger to her lips. "There is now no señorita. We arrive to-night. We must rehearse, practice, be letter perfect before stepping foot in Havana. This young gentleman, Don Alphonso, is the Count de Granville."

Don Alphonso, for the dark-skinned newcomer was he, bowed low. "Monsieur le Comte, I salute you. May your mission to Cuba be successful. May you remain there a happy wom—Frenchman. And now, friends all, I have to impart to you an important bit of news—the beginning of my own campaign for the cause of free Cuba.

"It is summed up in a few words.

You heard the lighthouse man say that seven vessels left Key West last night, under suspicion, with a mysterious cargo; that a Spanish gunboat expects to capture that fleet of supposed filibusters to-night. Well, gentlemen, that fleet of seven suspected vessels belongs to me. It will swing into Spanish waters to-night, as expected. What will happen then, we shall see—as I have already requested our host, Sir Charles, to meet the fleet that we may be present at the capture.”

And the don and Sir Charles, exchanging all sorts of significant winks and smiles, walked forward, chatting in a low tone.

CHAPTER X.

THAT evening, at sunset, when the Tramp was still about twenty miles from the Cuban coast, the forward watch cried: "Sail a' starboard!"

All rushed to the starboard deck and saw first the mast and later the white hulk of a ship. She seemed to be making all speed for the Tramp. The yacht kept steadily on her course.

With a powerful glass Sir Charles surveyed the white ship. "Shiver me, a United States gunboat!" he roared.

When within revolver shot of the Tramp the gunboat swung round abreast of the yacht. After the customary exchange of salutations and courtesies

of information as to who were aboard, where bound, and what cargo, the voice from the gunboat said: "We've been looking for a fleet of filibusters, seven of them. Seen anything of any suspicious-looking craft?"

"Nope!" yelled Sir Charles, from the bridge.

"We've just discovered a leak aport," shouted the voice from the gunboat. "All hands at pumps. Must turn back to Key West at once. If you sight any of the Spanish navy, just tell them that you saw us."

"Yep! You bet!" roared back Sir Charles.

After this the gunboat, the Montgomery, turned her prow toward Florida and sped away.

"That leak doesn't bother her much,

eh, Cap?" said Dick Van West, who was on the bridge with Sir Charles.

"No, not much," replied the baronet. "Just enough to make her put back," he added.

And the two men exchanged meaning glances. Each knew that what had just happened was only one of the ways the United States navy had of trying to hoodwink the Spanish, when in pursuit of filibusters. The fact is, Uncle Sam has enough on his hands without following up Cuban sympathizers and capturing them. With absolute instructions to capture certain suspected vessels, the captain of a pursuing warship, as he nears the Cuban coast, invariably discovers that the machinery is out of order, or that coal is low, or that there's a screw loose somewhere aboard his

ship. To meet an inbound vessel, as in the case of the Montgomery meeting the Tramp, is a stroke of particular good fortune. The inbound vessel ultimately informs the Spaniards that one of our gunboats was met in hot pursuit of the filibusters, but owing to an accident was obliged to put back. This information shows the Spaniards that the United States is doing its duty in endeavoring to prevent the carrying of supplies for the Cuban insurgents. The Spaniards, therefore, cannot accuse us of neglect in this respect or of connivance with the Cuban sympathizers.

At eight o'clock that evening the Tramp came in sight of the coast of Cuba. Her engines all but stopped; just enough headway was maintained to keep her from drifting. She was now within

three miles of the coast; in other words she was on the water highway of Spain.

At the bow stood two figures—two men, apparently. One was Don Alphonso, the other was the Frenchman, the Count de Granville. The young count's eyes gleamed with pride and excitement. He threw out his arms toward the shore and said softly: "My own, my beautiful!"

The young don turned toward the count, and looking into his eyes murmured, barely above a whisper: "My own, my beautiful!"

The count put a restraining finger on his lips, saying, "Alphonso is a man of his word."

The don turned aside, looking shoreward. He hastily brushed away—a tear perhaps.

The month was February. Peace, tranquillity, sadness, softness, serenity, color, intensity—all of these help to give the Cuban night hours a peculiar charm.

The moon shone. In all the sky there was not a cloud—only stars, dotting the mighty blue dome. Beneath, there was only a white yacht in the center of vast blue waters. All was light; a light as clear as of eventide; the light that makes lovers intense and enemies sigh for peace. It brought the outline of the shore in view. It enabled the outline of the shore to be seen.

“When shall we see the light of Morro Castle?” the count asked.

“Not until we round that promontory, the outline of which is just visible,” was the reply.

“Is not the light too great?” queried the softer voice, a voice full, rich and feminine.

“Nay, not too bright,” answered the don’s manly voice. “All is well—even if it were broad day. The enemy have concentrated all their forces in the wrong place. Our vessels are safe. Oh, my Anita, to-night will show the donna that others besides herself know a few tricks.”

“And to-morrow,” said the Count de Granville, otherwise Anita, “to-morrow the donna will see that with all her treachery she is no match for us.”

They steamed slowly ahead, making a quarter of a knot an hour. At nine o’clock something black loomed into the horizon. It was a vessel under full sail. At another point in the horizon a second

black splotch appeared — a second vessel under full sail. Another swam in view, and another, till there were in all seven. If these vessels had shown no lights the party on the Tramp and any one sailing in Cuban waters would have said they were filibusters stealing up to the Cuban coast to land supplies in the darkness and steal away again before dawn. But each of these seven vessels carried the regulation number of lights. Would filibusters advance thus boldly upon the coast?

Some one seemed to think, yes. For another black splotch had appeared — not a sailing vessel, but one with a trail of smoke. She was larger than any of the seven sailers. Within a minute two more of these larger ships steamed into sight. The three now spread out and

around the fleet of seven. While one remained behind, the other two steamed ahead and took up positions in front of the advancing sailers.

Those on the Tramp noticed that the fleet of seven began to take in sail. In a few moments, as if by concerted action, they had taken in all sail and lay to. The three steam vessels surrounded them in the form of a triangle. If there had been a race, a chase, it was now all over. The Spaniards evidently had caught seven filibusters within three miles of their coast and were therefore, according to the law of nations, permitted to capture the suspects and deal with them as enemies of their country.

On board the Tramp all had gathered at the stern and watched the silent

maneuvering of these seemingly phantom ships curiously.

"Shiver me! but that's the sight of a lifetime, shiver me, it is," roared the baronet.

"Hubby, shut up," ordered Lady Bluntly. "You make more noise than all those ships put together."

"What does it all mean?" asked Miss Daisy. "I'm frightened."

"Don't be afraid," whispered Mr. Dick, who was never far from her dimples and her head of fair hair. "Can't you see that this is all a job which the don has put up on the dagos? Do you think he would take this all so quietly, so calmly as he does, if things were not all O. K.? Look at him—he's gloating—he's in a state of supreme exultation. It's dollars to doughnuts

he's laid the whole game and paid a big price to win. If there isn't any mistake—Jehoshaphat! what a laugh on the Spanish dagos!"

The don, meanwhile, stood in the group with Anita, or as we must discreetly call her, the count, the Van Hollands and the Bluntlys.

"Magnificent!" he exclaimed, as the three steamers silently formed a triangle about the seven sailers and shut off steam. "Magnificent!"

Voices were now heard on the decks of the Spanish vessels giving orders. These vessels, as all had by this time discovered, were a gunboat, a transport and a coast patrol.

Each of these lowered small boats, seven in all. Each small boat was rowed to a certain sailer and three men and an

officer climbed aboard. There was no loud talking, no shouting. Therefore there was obviously no resistance.

“Now,” said the don to Sir Charles, “you can put on steam and proceed as far as Morro Castle. My ships are safe. Each of the seven is in possession of a Spanish officer and a file of three armed sailors. My men are treating them, at this minute, to wine and everything on board that is good to eat. They are making merry, for my men know that to-morrow they will laugh while their Spanish captors, whom they are now entertaining, will laugh too—as you say, on the other side of their faces.”

“But won’t you explain, Señor Don?” asked Senator Van Holland. “Your ships appear to have been captured as filibusters. The punishment is the

seizure of your ships, the imprisonment indefinitely of every man on board, and a dungeon in Morro Castle for yourself as soon as you step ashore."

"Exactly," said the don. "To-morrow morning my seven sailers will be taken into the harbor and searched. The Spanish have been told that the cargo of each vessel consists of arms and ammunition for the insurgents. My men claim that they are carrying relief, in the way of clothes, provisions and medicines, to the reconcentrados. My men are telling the truth. But now let me tell you all what one million dollars can do. Those three vessels surrounding my fleet are all the boats the Spanish have to watch this end of the Cuban coast. You can see, therefore, that the coast for miles and miles is open to any vessel which

chooses to land. Well, at this moment, seven vessels are unloading cargoes at a point on the Cuban coast not twenty-five miles from Havana. Those seven vessels belong, as these do, to me. While these were in reality loading provisions and clothing at Key West, the other seven vessels, each in hiding in a cove among the Florida Keys, were loading arms, ammunition and soldiers' rations. Every attention was drawn to the seven at Key West. They always loaded at night, so as to lend greater mystery as to their purpose. Naturally, they were suspected. They lay at Key West weeks before I ordered them to leave.

“That was to keep the Spanish vessels occupied near Key West, so that my other vessels among the keys could

receive their cargoes unnoticed. Finally I ordered the Key West fleet and the secret fleet to move the same night, giving each directions as to its course. Knowing that the Spanish vessels would all three be fully occupied in following one fleet, the other would be free to make the coast, unload, and slip away again unseen, undiscovered. The trick has worked to perfection. To-morrow morning while the authorities search these vessels and find cargoes according to our bills, the other fleet will have sailed away, leaving behind, in careful concealment, arms, ammunition, dynamite and rations for three months for seventy thousand men."

"Certainly," said Dick Van West, "if the insurgents can only raise the men, the war can be carried on to a successful

end. How much provision is aboard the seven vessels here?"

"Enough food, clothing and medicine," said the don, "to last seven thousand families of five persons each for three months."

"That's thirty-five thousand people," said Dick. "There are now five hundred thousand people in a starving condition. Well, every crumb counts. And though your stuff will leave four hundred and sixty-five thousand people out in the cold—still, don, old boy, you have—hello! the fleet's putting up sail. By Jove, the whole shooting-match is moving!"

The don looked puzzled. "I supposed they would lie out here till morning," he said.

As a matter of fact, the entire fleet,

led by the Spanish gunboat and followed by the transport and the patrol, were moving. The don's ships were under half sail and the Spanish ships moved at a corresponding speed.

As the gunboat passed the yacht an officer hailed in Spanish. The baronet, not knowing a word of Spanish, asked the don to answer.

"The Tramp, private yacht with private party, from New York for Havana," said the don in his native tongue.

"Please name your passengers," said the officer on the gunboat. "Also please put on steam enough to keep within speaking distance."

The required steam was put on, and the don named the passengers, all save himself.

"Is that all?" said the Spaniard.

“Have you not one Señor Don Alphonso de Castro on board?”

“No, damn it, no!” roared the baronet, hearing the name and scenting trouble. “If there’s any one aboard your ship who speaks English, will he please shout out.” No answer.

Sir Charles, who, of course, was on the bridge, pulled a bell-wire connecting with the engine-room. Steam was instantly shut off and the gunboat, still plowing ahead, made further hailing impossible.

The entire fleet passed the yacht, none of the don’s ships making the least sign of recognition.

The baronet hurried to the don and said bluntly, “Old man, something’s wrong. Why should that fleet put into the harbor to-night without a pilot?”

"They need no pilot," said the don who was really not so much at ease as earlier in the evening. "Spanish naval officers know their own harbor and would not trust a pilot anyway."

"I say, don, can we get in to-night, too?" asked the baronet.

"It is not allowed. Besides, we could not get in even at daylight, without a pilot."

"Shiver me!" exclaimed Sir Charles. "I suppose I'm a fool. But I tell you, old man, I'd like to land you in Havana to-night, somehow, before those dagos get in their fine work in the morning. I have an idea something is wrong somewhere."

"Impossible, Sir Charles," said the don. And lighting a cigar, Don Alphonso turned to the young Count de Granville.

At that moment the lights of Morro Castle came into sight.

Dick joined Anita, or rather De Granville, and the don, and while all three watched the lights of Morro, Dick said, rather sadly for him who was always so buoyant: "All ye who enter here leave hope behind."

CHAPTER XI.

THE next morning at daybreak the Tramp lay off Morro Castle, waiting for a pilot.

Time-worn and decrepit with the centuries were the yellow walls of the castle; and sad and somber and sinister. Behind those walls lay, ah! how many brave men of Cuba, suffering the penalty of patriotism and of rebellion! Such is war. The son rises against his parents and is chastised. The man takes up arms against his country and is killed. He conspires against the government that protects (or tyrannizes over) him, and he is put in a dungeon.

The first to appear on the deck of the

Tramp that unhappy morning was Don Alphonso. He looked as pale as an olive skin possibly can; and the lines under his eyes told of a sleepless night. He looked at the walls of Morro and sighed. His heart beat quickly. To himself he whispered:

“If I could but enter those walls, not as prisoner, but as victor—how many a despairing wretch would owe his life and liberty to me! Ah, horrible war, it is cruel, uncivilized; it is not humane.”

Up the companionway came Anita, dressed, as on the day before, in jaunty male attire, and answering to the name as written on the Tramp's clearance papers in the New York custom house—the name *Monsieur le Comte de Granville*.

She joined the don and put a hand in

his. A moment they stood thus, their eyes resting on the walls of that terrible castle as though the sight were a thing so horrible as to be irresistible.

“Señor Don,” said Anita, “I feel a ‘chill—as of the tomb. It is not the morning, no, nor the mist. It is a premonition of something dreadful about to happen. It is, as they say in English, a presentiment.”

“No, no,” said the don with an attempt at cheerfulness. “It is nothing. It is only the feeling that possesses all hearts as one again enters the harbor of one’s native land. Anita, thou art beautiful this morning, more beautiful than I have ever seen thee. All night, not myself but thou hast been in my mind. My vessels are safe, my men are safe, but thou—’tis for thee I fear. Let me stay

near you, so near that I can die for you if necessary. For to die to aid you would be happiness for me."

Anita then gave the don a look such as she had not given him since the time when they had parted years before.

Hardly above a whisper, she said, "Señor Don."

"Si, señorita," he replied, trying to appear unconcerned.

"I feel," the señorita said, "as I did on that morning they took me away from you—in that awful long ago. I want to kiss you, and I want you to kiss me, just once, now, for my sake and for the sake of—our dead child."

In Anita's eyes there were tears of grief and love commingling—as such tears do.

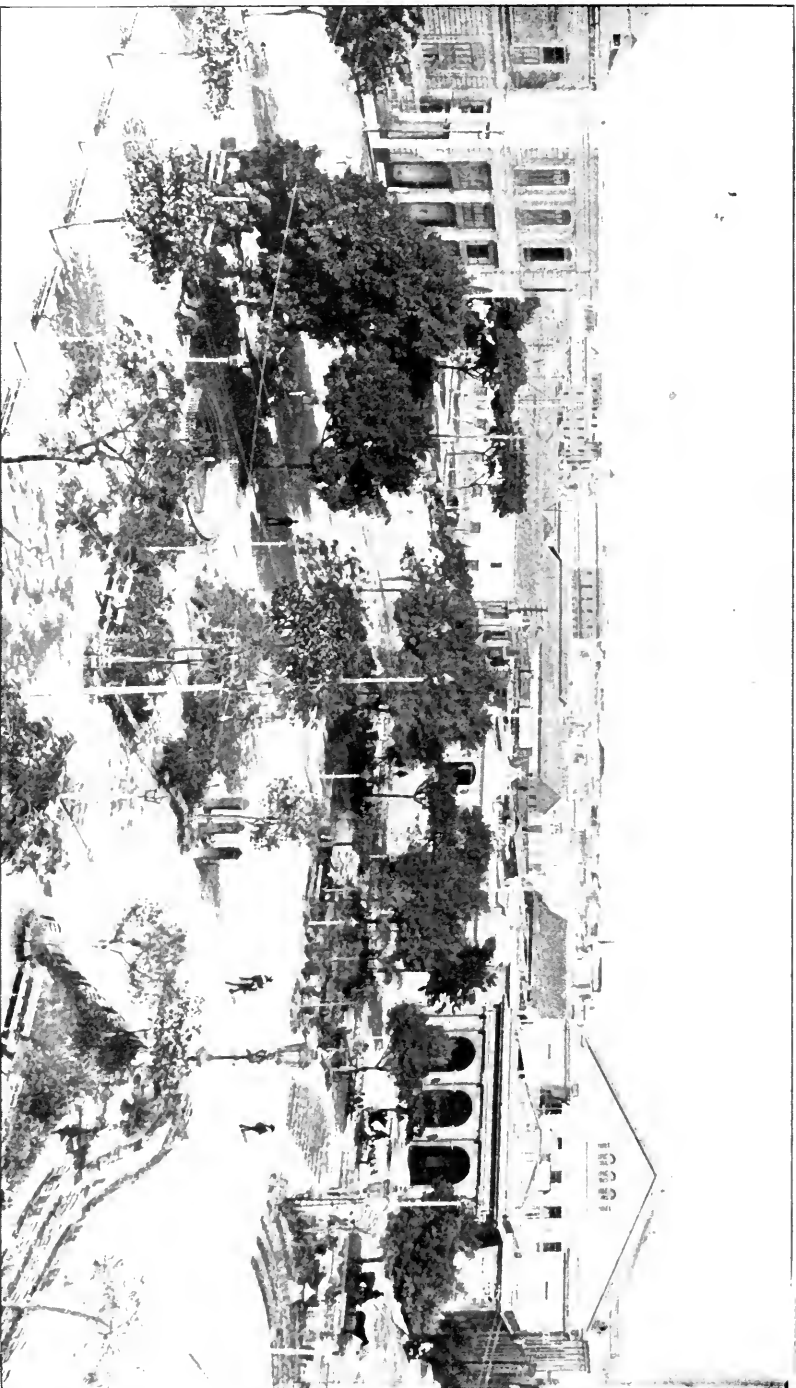
He took her tenderly in his arms.

Their lips met—that was the first and last moment of supreme love they were to know for a long time.

When he released her and they looked around Dick Van West stood in the companionway.

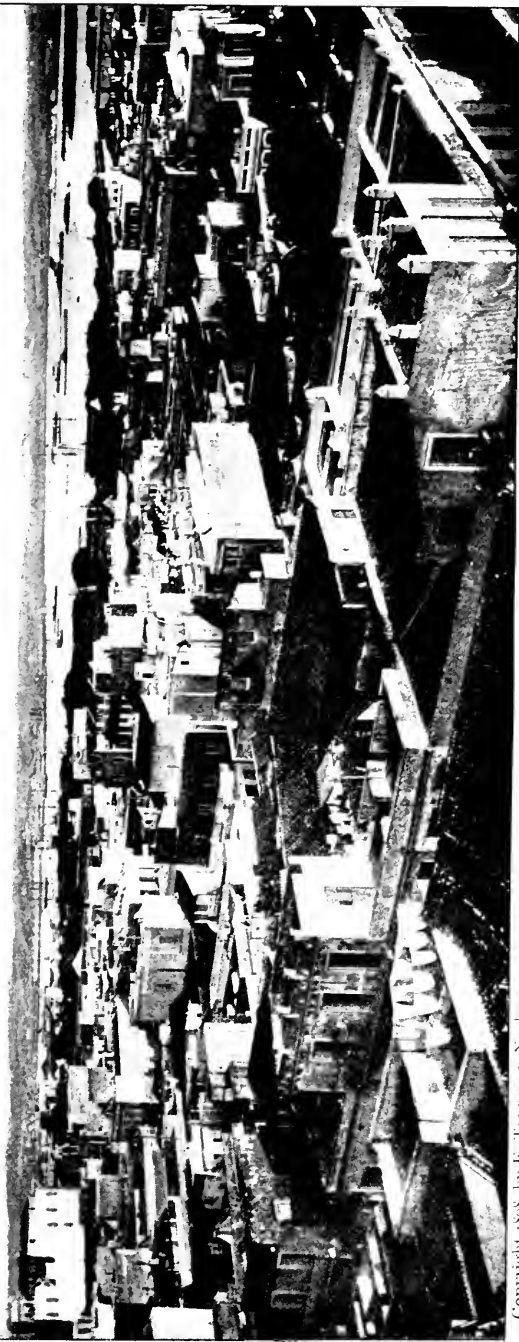
“That was pretty,” he murmured to himself. “And it is right.”

Of course, both the don and Anita had told Dick and all the party the story of their lives, reserving nothing. Thus the donna was accounted for, and the broad-minded men and women comprising the little band on the Tramp sympathized with the don, and forgave him the donna and his past. And they loved Anita. She had told them how the treacherous Isabella had contrived to have her, Anita, and the don, go through a mock ceremony of marriage—a ceremony per-



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In Havana streets. The Plaza Theatre Tacón, in the background. The Tacón is the Madison Square of Havana. All the masquerade balls are given in this building. In the Plaza the volunteers assemble every morning before guard mount.



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Havana and Harbor from a roof top. Photograph taken from the roof of highest house in the city of Havana, that of Señor Cadalla, a retired tobacco merchant, the Vanderbilt of Havana.

formed by a man clothed in the vestments of a priest—an impostor, a tool of the woman Isabella. Not until the next morning did they discover the perfidy of the Spanish woman. In the face of learning she was Isabella's dupe and confronted by her sorry plight, Anita was torn from the arms of Alphonso and hurried away to imprisonment, insult and indignity on the Isle of Pines—hurried away from him, charged with general conspiracy against the government, which charge brought against any man or woman means woe.

Now, as Dick stood in the companionway and saw Anita in the arms of Alphonso, he said, "It is right."

He could thoroughly understand why Anita believed Alphonso guilty of treachery on that unhappy occasion two

years before. He could not understand why she would not now trust him and believe in his love. And Dick sighed and said, "Woman moves in mysterious ways her wonders to perform. Look at my Daisy, for instance. She actually insists upon my waiting until we get ashore to make my declaration of independence to her father. Hello, hello! I hear a birdie singing sweetly."

A fair head dove under Dick's arm, with which he had thought to block the doorway. Following the fair head came a radiant figure in white duck, a fairy girl as beautiful as the dawn itself and as pink and as rosy.

Miss Daisy and Mr. Dick walked aft, hand in hand. They always arose early for the express purpose of enjoying such promenades.

Later appeared Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly and Senator and Mrs. Van Holland. Then they all went below for breakfast. The meal had scarcely been finished before "Pilot, ahoy!" they heard the sailors shouting overhead, and the entire party left their coffee to see the pilot.

Pilot boat number seven hove to, and came alongside. With a sailor's sure-footedness, a brawny guide of difficult passages climbed up a rope and stepped over the rail. His first words, in Spanish were:

"Señor! Santa Maria! I give you greeting. But, Señor el Capitano—you have on board the Senor Don Alphonso de Castro."

"Well," said the don himself, "proceed."

"What's he saying?" asked those who understood only the don's name.

"Senor," said the pilot, excitedly clasping his hands, "Señor, hide. Secrete yourself. In the harbor they will take you and throw you into Castle Morro. All your men are already lodged there in dungeons dark and under the earth."

"On what charge are my men arrested and on what charge am I wanted?" asked the don coolly.

"Better not trust this man," interposed Dick, who understood Spanish.

"He is trustworthy," said the don. "I know him of old."

"The charge, señor," continued the pilot, "is general conspiracy against the government."

The don moved one foot very slightly.

His voice was not thoroughly steady when he asked: "The charge—on what ground?"

"On the ground that cases of arms and ammunition and dynamite have been found in each of the senor's seven vessels. The captains told me to tell you that a few cases of the wrong goods, labeled provisions, have been put aboard of each vessel, though they cannot account for it. Ah, senor, 'tis a sad, sorry mistake. Every man, from captain to scullery apprentice, is deep down in the darkness of Morro. The officers now await the Senor Don. They know he is aboard this yacht."

And the pilot paused to throw out his hands supplicatingly to the don. "Ah, Senor Don, grant this, our request. We love the good Senor Don. Hide, secrete

yourself. You cannot fly, either on this boat or on ours. They are watching. They would pursue. They would shoot if you refused to allow a search. Senor Don, hide, secrete yourself."

The don drew himself up proudly. Pointing to the wheel-house, he said, "Pilot, do your duty."

The pilot, with great salt tears raining down his face, went forward to the wheel.

By this time Dick had explained the situation to all those who did not understand Spanish.

"But, by jingo!" he added, "if they take the don off this ship they'll have to fight us, hey, Sir Charles?"

"Shiver me! my lad, you are right," said the baronet. "Arrest my guest on board my ship? Never!"

Anita had quietly taken a place by the don's side. She took his hand and led him below.

"We must hide the don," cried Dick, "and quickly, too. We're moving now. In half an hour we will be anchored in the harbor."

"Right—hide the don," echoed Sir Charles. "But say," he added, pausing, "they will search the ship."

"Let them search," said the warlike Dick. "If they find the don they can't take him off excepting over our dead bodies."

And Dick and the baronet, in fact the whole party, went below.

"No," said the don, when they suggested this and that hiding place, "No! If my men are in trouble through carelessness—whether the mistake is my

fault or another's treachery, it is my duty to suffer with them. I shall sit down here, thank you, and finish my breakfast." And the don calmly proceeded to sip his coffee.

"Boat, ahoy!" shouted a sailor on deck.

Again all hands rushed above. No one on this eventful morning could tell what would happen from one minute to the next.

One of the boats peculiar to Havana harbor was pulling alongside. It was rowed by four sailors and in the stern, under a canvas awning, sat a group of officers. One of these stood up and motioned to the pilot in the Tramp's wheel-house to stop the yacht. The pilot obeyed and the Tramp came to a standstill. The boat drew alongside.

The officer who seemed to be in command stood up, saluted Sir Charles, who was on the bridge, and said:

“Senor, if you please, have you on board a passenger named Alphonso de Castro?”

Sir Charles did not understand, but Dick Van West did; and the hot-headed young American replied in Spanish, “What right have you to ask? This is a private vessel.”

“We regret, senor,” said the officer, turning to Dick. “But the commandant, the military governor of Havana, has ordered the arrest of the Senor Don Alphonso de Castro. We are informed that he is on this ship. We regret, but we must come aboard.”

“And we regret,” added Dick, “but we cannot allow you to step foot on this

deck." And Dick added in English, "Damn the dagos!"

"But we insist," the officer went on. "We demand the surrender of the Don Alphonso de Castro."

"He is here," said a sturdy voice. The don himself came on deck, and when he reached the railing lifted his yachting cap to the officer in the boat. "Senors, he said, "I am the Don Alphonso whom you demand. Sir Charles," turning to the baronet, "I beg you to permit the officers to come aboard."

Sir Charles, with oaths, ejaculations and all sorts of protests, ordered a rope ladder lowered. By this ladder the officers, four in all, mounted to the Tramp's deck. The don stepped forward, and bowing, said, "Senors, you are welcome. I am your prisoner."

That was all. No incivility, no harsh words—not yet.

The Tramp steamed on past Morro Castle, past Cabanas prison with its walls as old, as decrepit, as somber and sinister as those of Morro.

“I say,” said Dick to Miss Daisy. “See those two prisons, Morro and Cabanas? Well, they are only a pebble’s throw apart, are they not? Well, say, I happen to know”—here Dick lowered his voice to a whisper—“I happen to know where plans of those two castles lie at this moment and also the plan of a certain underground passage connecting the two. By jinks! I’ve an idea. Let the don go to Morro. Don’t feel so bad, Day, there’s a dear. Trust your Dick, your Richard, your husband to be. I’ve an idea. Perhaps it’s not

all up with the don. I'll write to Washington to-night—in a week or two—well, I'll startle the world. Just watch me and the *Diurnal*."

In the harbor, that harbor so beautiful above and so foul below, the Tramp was given an anchorage. It was an anchorage destined to make the yacht famous. She was anchored to a buoy halfway between the Spanish cruiser Alphonso XII. and the American battleship Maine. As the Tramp dropped anchor the boys on the Maine cheered. But the Spaniards on the Alphonso XII.—what did they? They hissed.

Lady Bluntly waved her handkerchief to the Maine boys, while Sir Charles shook his fist and his whole body at the Spaniards on the Alphonso XII.

The Tramp's boarding-steps were lowered.

Preparations were made to go ashore. The first to leave was Don Alphonso. With a proud, firm step, he walked to the gangway and stood in readiness.

All bade him a sad farewell. All spoke the first kindly words that came to tongue.

Lady Bluntly shed some of the few tears of her lifetime. Mrs. Van Holland and Miss Daisy broke down completely. Sir Charles swore with suspicious vehemence. Dick Van West was the only cheerful one of the party.

The Spanish officers, each resplendent in gold lace, gold buttons, and swords with golden hilts, pretended, as well-bred people would, not to see the adieus given. But not a movement of any kind

escaped them, and though they understood not a word of English, there was not a motion of any lip which they did not watch.

As Dick shook hands, he said to the don, as if the remark were of the most indifferent nature, "Don, the New York *Diurnal* and Dick Van West will work together. I'll meet you there later. Wait for me. Tell the others. Be cheerful."

The last to say *Adios* was the Count de Granville. He said no word. Merely, foreign fashion, he embraced the don, and with a look that spoke of worlds undiscovered, stepped back.

The next minute the don descended the boarding-steps and entered the boat. The officers followed. The boat pulled away.

Havana Harbor has two sides: on the one the city, on the other, Castles Cabanas and Morro.

The boat containing the don did not pull toward the city.

Its head was turned toward Castle Morro.

The men on the two warships, watching the boat, again cheered and again hissed.

Only this time it was the men on the Spanish ship-of-war, Alphonso XII., who cheered. While the Jack Tars on Uncle Sam's battleship—the Maine—hissed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE date of the arrival of the Tramp in Havana Harbor and the arrest of Don Alphonso, as just described, was February 15, 1898.

This date will be remembered and talked about in Havana for many generations.

On the morning of that eventful date a woman sat at breakfast in one of the finest houses in the Calle del Prado, the Fifth Avenue of Havana. The house was built like all other Havana houses, from the poorest to the best, with marble floors, large rooms, twenty-foot ceilings, a courtyard in the center upon which all the living rooms opened,

balconies lining the single upper floor, birds, sweet singers, hanging in cages from the balconies, the courtyard redolent of banana trees, lemon trees and Spanish olive.

The woman referred to sat at a table in one of the windows opening on the court. One glance would show that she was a woman of some consequence—in her own mind of great importance. Not because she was beautiful, for she seemed one who had long ago ceased to think of beauty. Her self-consciousness of power seemed to spring from some other source, some indefinable and invisible mystery. Her beauty, her magnificent and voluptuous person, and her magnetism were all merely things to which she seemed reconciled. She was dressed in a loose morning-gown, cut

low at the neck, crimson in color, and trimmed with Spanish lace.

She finished her cheese; that is, she finished her breakfast. A man-servant took away the dishes and put coffee before her. She lighted an Havana cigarette, a long affair in brown paper. Its fragrance was delicious.

A gong sounded twice. The porters at the street entrance to Havana houses thus announce the arrival of a visitor.

An officer, in the blue and white striped uniform worn by the Spanish army in Cuba, crossed the courtyard and ran up the marble steps to the room where the woman sat watching the smoke of her cigarette. She arose. The officer bowed. In his eyes there was love. In the woman's eyes a careful observer would have detected contempt.

“Senora, the yacht is here,” the officer said.

“Well, where is the list of her distinguished passengers?” the woman asked. She emphasized the word distinguished sarcastically.

“Senora, I have it here.” The officer pointed to a pocket in his blouse.

“Well, why don’t you produce it?”

“Because—that girl did not come with the yacht after all—at least her name is not on this list.”

“Read the names on the list,” the woman said imperatively.

The officer produced a paper and read: “Lady Bluntly, owner; Sir Charles Bluntly; Senator and Mrs. Van Holland; Miss Daisy Van Holland; Richard Van West; Senor Don Alphonso de Castro, and——”

“Well?” the senora said. “Well? Why stop at the name of Alphonso de Castro? Is a prisoner in the dungeon of Morro Castle so important that he deprives you of breath?”

“No, senora, the last name is of no consequence. It is a Frenchman. But I was wondering if Don Alphonso is quite comfortable in his dungeon. It was daylight when he entered the gates of the castle. I went out to the yacht personally and got him, as you know. I also conducted him to the door of his dungeon. There I offered him his liberty on the—er—a—you know, the usual honorable condition. He merely said, ‘Officer, do your duty.’ The insulting cad! I pulled the bolts, opened the door and pushed him into dungeon, number 47—fool.”

“Senor Casses, what is the last name on that list, the name of the Frenchman?”

“Monsieur le Comte de Granville,” the officer said.

“Senor, have you seen this Frenchman’s passport? Does it set forth that he is a citizen of France?”

“Senora, one needs no passport to get into Havana. But to get out, things are different.” And the officer moved his sword so that it clanked on the marble floor.

The senora thought a moment. Then she said: “Senor Casses, you are exactly what you called Don Alphonso a moment ago.”

“If you think so, senora, then of course, there is not one, there are two fools in Havana.”

“Senor Casses, the Frenchman, so-called, on that list, is our bird. The Count de Granville is no other than Anita Verona. As she is of age to-day, she inherits her title. She is the Countess de Verona.” The woman’s lip curled and she continued, “Now, my good Señor Casses, trot along and find out exactly what our friends mean to do to-day. Avoid the Count de Granville; for as the Countess Anita, she may recognize your—your handsome face.”

The officer smiled and played with his sword, as if pleased. As a dog wags its tail so a Spanish officer plays with his sword. Señor Casses arose, hesitated, seemed ill at ease. Probably he wished to say something.

“Señora, your beauty has no equal, your grace and charm, unexcelled, have

robbed me of that greatest of powers—the power that holds the tongue motionless. Señora, I love you.”

“Yes, yes, of course you do,” said the señora impatiently. “But hurry, now. Find out all about the Tramp party.”

“Si, señora, but —” The officer stepped boldly to her side and said, almost in a whisper, “But when am I to have my reward?”

“Your reward?” the señora laughed. “Ah, so you want a reward, Señor Casses? I believe you also required a reward from Anita for furnishing her with liberty. Oh, well, we won’t mention that little affair. Now you want a reward, for what? I will tell you. For furnishing me with revenge you have already accomplished half your task by landing Don Alphonso in Morro dungeon.

Now the other half is this: Take Anita, Countess of Verona, into your polite charge, and give her room 'number 48,' in your very comfortable Hotel de Morro. You understand? And as for your reward—there's my hand."

"Ah, senora, you are an angel of goodness. I am suffering with too much happiness."

"Why?" the senora asked.

"Because you have given me an easy task and a great reward."

"I have, have I? Well, how exactly, would you describe the reward?"

"Why, senora—you are to be mine."

"Yours, yes. All yours. Nothing less than all—which means that I will marry you, that I will be your wife."

"But, senora, I—" the officer began to stammer.

The Spanish woman looked at him with eyes full of threats. "Senor Casses, I am tired of being called señora when I am really señorita. Your reward shall be—a wife. That wife shall be me—and only a priest can make me yours. You understand?"

"Señora, I am in heaven," the officer said.

As he descended the marble steps he muttered under his breath, "Not on your life!"

Above, the woman murmured, "He is rich, he is an idiot. He is not worthy to touch the don's shoes. My God! My Alphonso, my boy—how you suffer! Oh—I—no, it is too late to relent."

The truth was that the Señora Isabella, since leaving the don had discovered that she loved him. And she had her

own share of pain. She, too, was suffering.

In an hour the officer returned.

"They are at the Hotel Inglaterra," he said. "Fell in with a young blond fellow, Van West. He told me to call him plain Dick. He is a correspondent for that accursed newspaper, the New York *Diurnal*. He pumped me, I pumped him. He wanted to know how Spaniards feel toward America on account of the dismissal of Minister de Lima from Washington. And I wanted to know how his party intend passing their time. To-night, señora, they are going to the masquerade ball at the Theatre Tacon."

The señora threw her cigarette down into the courtyard and closed her fan.

"Señor Lieutenant Casses, this evening we will attend the masque ball."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON that tragic and historical 15th of February, Havana was ruled by King Carnival.

During the usual siesta, after breakfast, the city's streets were frequented only by those whose duties called them abroad. Between five and six o'clock, however, the masqueraders, the Carnival fiends, began to appear. The small victorias which conveniently infest the streets by thousands were all engaged carrying masked señoritas and señoras who battled with one another, *coufetti* their ammunition. Up and down the Prado they drove, and around the Parque Central, and forth and back from one

plaza to another. Spanish soldiers and officers in uniform wandered from their barracks and spread all over the city, ten thousand strong. From Morro Castle they came; and from Cabano Fortress, and the fortifications of La Punta and Castillo de Principe, and from all the military stations surrounding the city.

In the hills about Havana were hundreds of insurgents, lynx-eyed, serious, desperate. The Cuban rebellion was already three years old. What had been accomplished? Not independence, but more widespread oppression, to which was added starvation.

On this particular 15th of February Cuba was a desolate waste. The war thus far had cost Spain fifty million dollars and hundreds of thousands of men.

A million Cubans, principally women, children and aged men, the families of rebel soldiers in the field, had been driven from their homes in the country and concentrated in the towns. Half of these, that is, half a million people, were now dead. They had died by thousands of starvation and exposure. There was still left a half-million of these people who were dying for want of food.

In Havana alone twenty-five thousand reconcentrados — thus they were called — lay about the streets, in the gutters, starving.

In Havana there was a reign of misery. As Paris, during the reign of terror, the city was pleasure mad. Beside bull-fights, and cock-fights, and gambling at the clubs, music and prom-

enades in the parks, masquerade balls were given in all the theatres.

Between five and six o'clock in the afternoon, as we have seen, pleasure lovers had already masked for the balls that were to follow. The multitude which now filled the streets had just come from the great bull-fight across the harbor. Sixty-five thousand dollars had been taken in at the gate—despite the fact that thousands of human beings were starving in Havana's streets. The only people who had not time for the bull-fight were the coffin-makers.

That the city was under military rule was made apparent by the thousands of Spanish soldiers who were loafing about, idling on the plaza and lolling in the cafés. Nor was martial law manifested by soldiers only. There were also

sailors—sailors and officers from Spanish warships in the harbor.

Another warship there was in that harbor. It was not Spain's. It belonged to Uncle Sam, and the sailors, on that particular day, were not given shore leave. If it had pleased God otherwise, and those sailor-boys had been permitted to go ashore, the tragedy of the night would have been no less tragic, but less awful. The name of that battleship was the *Maine*.

Night came and the doors of the Theatre Tacon were thrown open to the masqueraders. The ball began. Spaniards and Creoles and Cubans and Americans danced to the tunes of a native band. The music was of a peculiar kind, half-African. From the moment the ball began it did not cease. There

were two bands, playing alternately; the one struck up the moment the other beat its last tattoo. Dancers, in masks or mantillas, and dominos, crowded the floor. The galleries and boxes were filled. In one of the boxes in the center of the first tier, probably the most conspicuous box in the theatre, sat Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly and their guests from the Tramp. They came rather late. Every eye in the theatre was upon them.

On the floor among the maze of whirling dancers there was a murmuring:

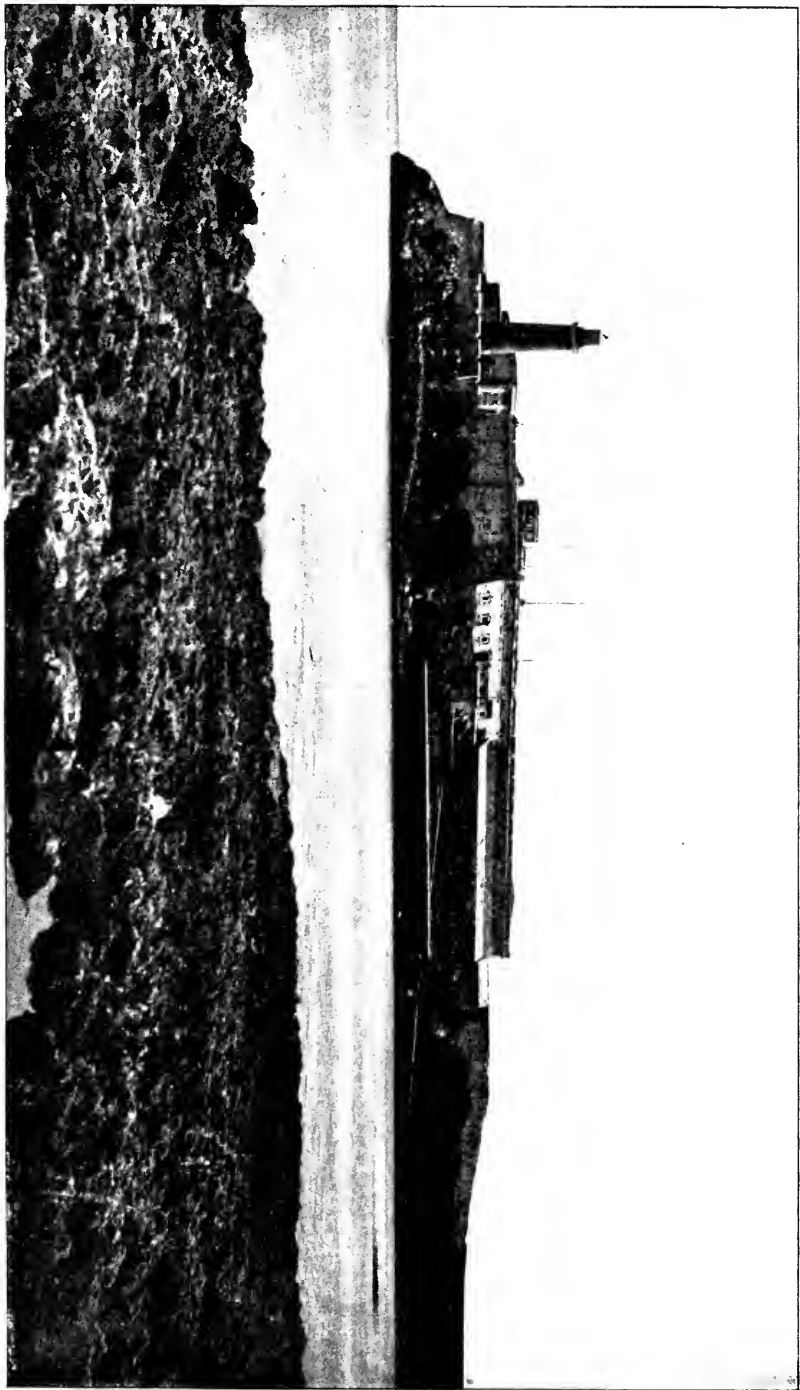
“El Americanos!”

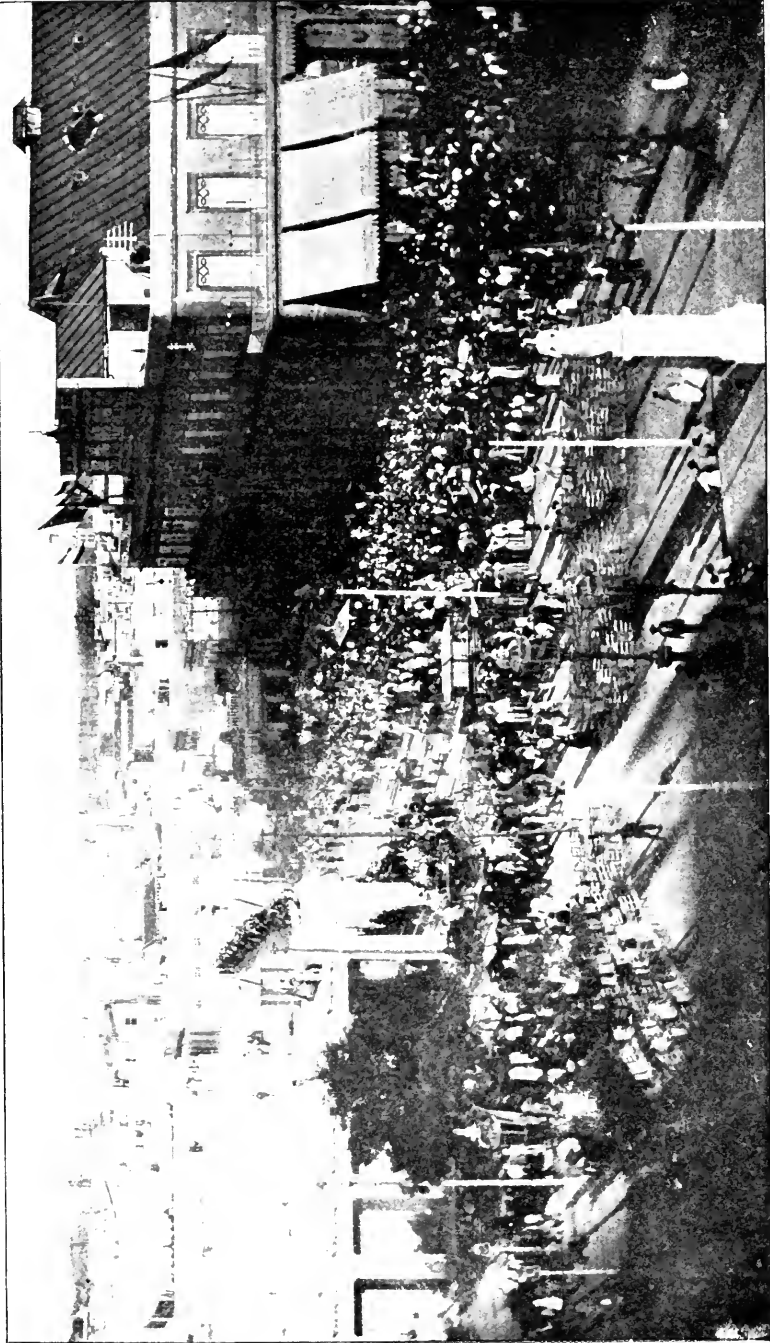
The news spread.

“El Americanos!”

There was just the slightest hissing. “El Americanos!” Spanish women raised their mantillas a trifle, to see the American party. Cuban girls

Morro Castle from opposite shore under the walls of Fort Punta. Taken March 1900. Photographer at the risk of his life. Captain. Morro





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Early morning, Havana. Crowds watching volunteer Spanish troops passing. Every morning regiments

lowered their coquettish little fans curiously, just to get a glimpse of the Americans. Spanish officers in uniform turned their backs. Evidently, the party in the box of state were the only Americans present.

The box belonged to the captain-general of Cuba. He had given it for the evening to Senator Van Holland. Still the captain-general did not accompany his guests. Spain had no love for America. The two nations were at peace, yet trouble was brewing, and the Spanish hatred of America was growing apace. The captain-general, therefore, very discreetly remained away from the ball rather than be seen entertaining a party from the United States.

"El Americanos!" The murmuring continued, grew bolder; the people

talked, first in natural tones, then excitably.

“El Americanos!”

“What right have they here, anyway?” asked the Spaniards.

“They want Cuba,” said the Cubans. “But they can’t have it. Only one flag can float over Morro Castle, and that is the flag of Cuba.” This speech was followed by cheers on that part of the floor.

“They want Cuba,” said the Spaniards. “They can’t have it. Only one flag shall float over Morro Castle, and that is the flag that now waves to the breeze.” And in that part of the room there were also cheers.

“What right have these Americans to send a warship to our harbor?” the Cubans asked each other. “We don’t want a United States warship here. Let

the United States give us money and we will fight our own battles. The Maine is of no use to us."

"Why have the Americans sent a battleship here?" asked the Spaniards. "They had better keep their warships at home. America has insulted us. Do we need watching, on our own property, like schoolboys, that the Americans should send a battleship to stand monitor over us? We have no use for the Maine."

Just then something occurred. A masquerader had entered the room dressed as Columbia. The red, white and blue was too much for the Spaniards present.

An officer knocked off the masquerader's hat—it was made of a Union Jack. The officer's action was enough. In five

minutes the clothes of Columbia had been torn from the masquerader's back. The Stars and Stripes, now in shreds, were tossed to the four corners of the room and trampled under the feet of both Spaniards and Cubans. Then the girl was ordered from the floor.

While this scene was being enacted, two persons, a woman with her face hidden under a heavy black mantilla, and an officer in uniform, sat in a stage box engaged in earnest conversation. The eyes of both were fastened on the captain-general's box containing the party of Americans.

"Tell me, Señor Lieutenant," said the woman, "which of those pigs, I mean those Americans, is the senator and which the baronet?"

"The tall man with the bushy hair,"

said the officer, "is Senator Van Holland, and the stout, short man, with his head half-bald and shining, is the Englishman, Sir Charles Bluntly. The lady in the tailor-made gown is his wife. The blond young girl is Van Holland's daughter Daisy, and the blond fellow is Senor Van West—I mean 'just plain Dick.' The other young man, Santa Maria! Senora, I would never have recognized but for the suspicion which you imparted to me. She had the most glorious hair. She has clipped it to look like a boy's. She has a most beautiful figure—she has deformed it. She has *petite* hands. They are hidden in gloves that are several sizes too large."

"Ah, senor, you seem to have observed the fine points of your prisoner and strangler of Ceuta." And the senora

laughed. Quick gleams of her white teeth were caught beneath her mantilla. "Nothing like a masquerade ball for our work, señor," she added. "A woman can see without being seen or recognized. What are the several intentions of these —*canaille?*"

"Well, senora, I learn from 'just plain Dick' that the senator means to investigate the condition of the reconcentrados. Mrs. Van Holland, his wife, will give her attention to the hospitals. Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly seem to have no particular object in coming. Sir Charles is in no way English except that he has a title. He is thoroughly American in his views and habits. Lady Bluntly is too sharp for me—I can't make her out. Before marriage she was a newspaper woman, worked for the New

York *Diurnal*. She is smarter than she looks. That blond—hey! Santa Maria, she is harmless and belongs to ‘just plain Dick.’

“You appear to like the blond, Senor Casses. So she belongs to your friend Dick, does she? And you would like her not to belong to him. Is that it? Well, we shall see. You have not told me the exact mission upon which this Senor Dick has come to Cuba.”

“Ah, senora, he says he has come just to show his friend, the Count de Granville, around Cuba.”

“Your Senor Dick, lieutenant, is practicing his profession; he is lying. He is the man who conducted Anita and her coffin all over the United States for the *Diurnal*. Senor Casses, look out for this man Dick—he must be gotten out of the

way. He seems rather a fine-looking boy. Ah!--you may leave him to me."

"Very well, senora, if I leave him to you, then the blond senorita is left for me. It is well. Santa Maria, she is leaving--no! she is going to dance."

All eyes were again turned upon the state box. The party of Americans were leaving it. Going home? No, they appeared on the floor. The younger members of the party began dancing, while the older ones roved curiously among the masqueraders and gold-laced officers.

One person remained in the box--a slight, dark young man wearing loose-fitting clothes and white gloves. He seemed to look defiantly at the scores of glasses which were trained upon him.

It was at this moment that Senora

Isabella said to Lieutenant Casses, "Senor, the last time you saw that—that Frenchman—in Ceuta she nearly killed you. You recovered, left Ceuta and came to Havana, hoping to find your strangler and escaped prisoner. You have found her. The last time I saw her, in New York, a few weeks ago, I nearly killed her with a sword. She recovered from the wound and has come to Havana to defy me. The rebel! There she sits alone. Senor Casses, this is the moment for you to do your duty."

The officer arose, bowed, and left the senora.

A few minutes later curiosity throughout the theatre became general. A Spanish officer had entered the state box and was now talking to a very dark-skinned American. The officer was a

young lieutenant, the adjutant of the garrison stationed in Morro Castle. Strange! An officer, second in command of the castle that was the pride of Havana, engaged publicly in conversation with one of the hated Americans. If the throng had only known the history of the two people they were watching there would have been trouble.

Anita and Lieutenant Casses were again face to face.

Anita had remained in the box, alone, purposely to test the worth of her disguise. When the others arose to descend to the floor and mix with the dancers, Anita had said: "Dick, I shall remain here."

"But every eye in the house will be riveted upon you," protested Dick.

"Exactly as I wish," answered Anita,

remaining seated. "If I am not recognized to-night, I never will be. The only person I fear is Senora Isabella, and probably she is not here."

"Don't jeopardize your cause by being rash," Dick insisted. "Come to the floor with us. Less danger, you know. Remember what you promised Don Alphonso. There! There! don't shed tears. He's all right. Hold your tears until I fail, too. For not until I fail need you worry. Why risk recognition here? You are not going to remain in Havana. You promised the don you would go at once to Mantanzas, join the regular line and see that the cargoes of his seven ships get into the right hands. So now, come, won't you?"

"I shall remain here alone," said Anita decisively.

Dick went away, whispering his misgivings to Miss Daisy. Before they had reached the floor, however, Dick had forgotten Anita. Miss Daisy had a way of claiming his entire mind. They mingled with the dancers.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Casses had entered Anita's box; or rather he had swaggered in and taken a chair behind her. His air was that of one who, having been conquered in the past, feels that he is now complete master.

Anita arose and bowed. She recognized the intruder, and her heart beat so rapidly that she feared she might faint. Did he know her?

"I met your party this morning," said Casses. "I gave myself the pleasure of coming here to meet Le Comte de Granville."

Anita breathed easier. Thank God! Casses had not penetrated her disguise. Indeed, why should he? Probably he supposed her dead. The last time he had seen her she was in rags—very few rags to be sure—and her hair hung about her in wild abandon; she was as much unlike her present well-dressed and civilized self as possible. She felt that she need have no fear. Neither Casses nor any one who knew her in Ceuta would recognize her now.

“I believe I have the honor of greeting Monsieur Casses?” she said, man fashion. “Be seated, monsieur. My friends mentioned the fact of their meeting you. I am glad the pleasure is not entirely theirs.”

Anita spoke in English, attempting to give her words a French accent.

Casses' eyes twinkled merrily, and then cruelly.

"We have not a moment to spare," he said, drawing nearer to her. "You are somewhat better dressed than when I last saw you—Monsieur Count."

Anita's heart gave one great leap. She looked about with a hunted look, dazed, like one who had received a sudden blow from behind.

She was conscious that she must answer. "I was not aware, Monsieur Casses," she stammered, "that we had met before."

"Anita, come to your senses. I am here to arrest you in the name of the King of Spain. You are my prisoner."

Great agitation often produces the most extraordinary calmness and clearness of mind. Such was the case with

Anita. She determined to depend upon her disguise and her friends and continue the denial of her real self.

“Are you accustomed to playing a part in a farce, Monsieur Casses? You are really clever.”

“Anita, you are the actress now. I am actor, yes, for I am here for action. You may not be quite so pleased with my acting. I have an order to take you across the harbor; you must come with me unless”—the officer paused, took a package of papers from his coat pocket. “Unless,” he added, “you will sign these.”

“Monsieur Casses, be kind enough to leave this box. Do you wish me to call my friends? They are Americans.”

“Americans be ——. Anita, listen. We must hurry. Here are the papers; you

can guess what they are. Here is a pen, stylographic, already inked. Anita, sign these documents and I will leave the box and you shall be free and safe ever after. Refuse, and you go with me to a Morro dungeon—to be shot finally, as an escaped convict and a Cuban spy caught within Spanish lines. The horrors of Ceuta will be as nothing to your life in Morro. You will be entirely at my mercy. With these papers, your fortune in the United States can be claimed. You think, perhaps, that your signature will give the money to Spain and so you contemplate a refusal. Not so, my strangler, my would-be murderess. These are deeds making over your fortune to me, personally. Come, Anita, choose! Sign—or suffer.”

Anita sprang up. “Monsieur, I will

simply tell your fellow-officers and your countrymen what sort of a scoundrel they have among them. You have perverted these papers to your own use. I see through it all. You are planning to rob some one by the name of Anita. I am glad to be able to protect this person, whoever she is, against such a villain as you. Leave this box at once."

"Come, come, Anita, don't be so tragic. Sign these papers. Is money worth more than your life? If I leave the box, remember that you leave it too—with me."

Anita had been calculating the height of the balcony railing and estimating Casses' weight. While he was pleading and threatening, she suddenly seized him around the waist and with the nerve-strength of desperation, lifted him over

the railing and let go. He fell more than twelve feet, landing on the heads and shoulders of the closely packed dancers. There were curses and shouts and general confusion. Some cried fire, some said the war with America had begun, others said a Spanish officer had been murdered by one of the Americans in the captain-general's box.

Amid the pandemonium Anita made her escape. Down the stairs she walked leisurely so as not to attract the attention of the throngs that lined the corridors and staircase. To get out she was obliged to go through the *café*. She made her way among tables crowded with those who preferred drinking to dancing.

No one observed her particularly. When alone she evidently excited less

attention than with the Americans. For her dark olive complexion and her distinctly Cuban features allowed her to pass unmolested in a crowd. She came to the guards at the entrance. Elated over her escape, she was about to pass when a woman stepped in front of her. This woman did not wear a domino like most of the other women at the ball. Her ample and beautiful form was robed in a gown of black lace, her face was hidden beneath a heavy black mantilla.

"Halt," she commanded. "Corporal," turning to one of the soldiers. "call the guard." The soldier recognized the woman in the black mantilla. He knew her as the most beautiful and most successful of Spain's women spies in Havana. His instructions were to obey her orders as he would an officer's.

The soldier clapped his hands. A squad of eight armed soldiers rushed up and surrounded Anita.

At this moment Senor Casses, rather disheveled by his fall, rushed up. He said something in a low tone to the woman in the black mantilla and then turned to Anita.

“By God, you little devil, you shall pay for the pleasure you have had with me.”

“Indeed, Senor Casses, it is no particular pleasure to kick a dog. I perceive that single-handed you are no match for a woman. Your eight men with their loaded rifles are probably more capable of overpowering me.”

Casses made a sign to the soldiers, and they formed in close file around the unfortunate Cuban heroine.

“March!” commanded the lieutenant.

“One moment,” the prisoner said. And dashing between two of the soldiers on her left, she sprang to the side of the woman in black and tore the mantilla from her face. Then she ran back to her place. She had accomplished all this in less than three seconds of time.

As she moved away she waved the piece of the torn mantilla toward the infuriated woman in black. “I merely wished to take this to Don Alphonso,” she called back, “as a souvenir of you, Donna Isabella.”

The soldiers now tied Anita’s arms at the elbows and gagged her.

Thus they marched through the streets—a young man apparently, between two files of soldiers, four on each side, and an officer following in the rear.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHERE were Anita's American friends? Why did they not, at least, try to save her from public arrest?

Because Senora Isabella had succeeded in preventing any interference on their part. At the moment Lieutenant Casses entered the box and spoke to the supposed Count de Granville, the senora stepped upon the ballroom floor. Winding her way through the circling throng, she came to Dick Van West's side and whispered to him, "Senor, your friend the count is in grave danger. He is known, or rather she is recognized. You had better hasten back to your friend, la Senorita Maria Anita Verona."

Dick listened to these words like one in a dream. With one hand the senora had clasped his fingers and with the other she had raised her mantilla just enough for Dick to see a face that entranced him. The effect of the woman's eyes on Dick was instantaneous and marvelous. Her beauty went to his head like wine. Her eyes seemed to be pricking him with a thousand invisible darts.

"This way," the senora said, indicating the end of the room opposite the box where Anita sat, talking with Lieutenant Casses.

"But that is not the way," protested Dick.

"It is the quickest way," the senora insisted. "It is the stage. Come, I will take you behind the scenes. There is a

private passage leading to the state box. You can run the length of that passage at full speed while here you will have to go slowly, because you will have to pick your way. You are an American. Tread on a single Spanish domino, jostle one Spanish sword by rushing through this crowd, and you will excite dangerous attention."

Dick hurriedly turned and whispered to Miss Daisy, "Where are your father and mother?"

"I don't know. We have lost the rest of the party in the crush."

"Well, follow me, Day. Don't ask questions. Come on."

Thus Dick Van West and Daisy fell into Isabella's trap. She led them to the stage. On the way they met Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly and Senator

and Mrs. Van Holland. Dick ordered them to follow him and say nothing.

The senora led the party to the stage; thence, behind the scenes to a yawning doorway opening into what appeared to be a long passage.

“Enter and hurry,” Isabella said, stepping aside for the others to pass. They filed through. The last to pass was Dick. As he did so the senora said, “Your friend is now safe,” and she closed the door after him, smiling.

It was at this moment that Anita, with her never-failing strength, had thrown the Spanish officer over the box railing, down into the pit among the dancers.

The American party in their dark and strange quarters heard the shouting of men and the screeching of women.

“Big guns and bursting boilers!”

ejaculated Sir Charles. "Where in the deuce are we?"

"Charlie, shut up," commanded his wife.

"Come on, come on," said Dick, groping his way in the dark. "This passage leads to the boxes."

His outstretched hands came into contact with a wall. He turned, thinking he was moving in the wrong direction. But again he struck a wall.

"We had better hurry," remarked Senator Van Holland quietly.

"Poor child! Let us get to her at once," said his wife.

"Excuse me, we won't get to her in a great hurry," said Dick. "We are caught in a trap. That woman with the lace thing over her head was a fine bit of cheese. This is what I get for trust-

ing the quality of cheese by its appearance. Hello there!" and Dick pounded on what appeared to be a wooden wall.

No answer. All felt a chill, a sense of coming misfortune. Dick lighted a match. They were in a long narrow passage, sure enough. But the doors at either end were locked.

Of a sudden one of the doors flew open and the woman of the black mantilla stepped in, followed by a soldier bearing a lantern.

"This way, this way," the senora said, as if anxious. "Why have you been so long? Recollecting the darkness of the passage—I hope not too late—I hurried to light your way. Come quickly."

The party hurried along and entered the corridor which they recognized as

the one they had traversed in going to their box.

Dick rushed ahead. In a second he returned. "She is not there," he said excitedly.

The woman in the black mantilla had disappeared.

Our American friends hurried downstairs and through the café to the entrance. They learned from the guards at the door that the Frenchman of their party had been led away between soldiers—they knew not why or whence, though the order they heard the lieutenant give was: "To the Machina."

"The Machina!" echoed Dick. "Why, the Machina is where the little transport is that plies between the navy yard and Morro Castle. Come on! All file into cabs."

Three cabs were called and the party got in. Dick and Mrs. Van Holland in the first, Sir Charles and Lady Bluntly in the second, and the Senator and Miss Daisy in the last.

“To the Machina, and drive like the devil,” shouted Dick, in Spanish, to the drivers.

It was still early in the evening, perhaps about nine o'clock. Within the hour an appalling disaster was to take place. As the cathedral bells chimed the hour of nine, only those responsible for what was to follow knew the night of February 15, 1898, was to be made historical.

The city was manifestly in a state of suppressed excitement. None could tell why. Groups of soldiers gathered in the plaza, in *cafés* and along the Prado, and

made uncomplimentary remarks about the United States.

Newsboys were crying extras in the streets. *La Lucha*, the leading Havana daily, announced that the Spanish minister to the United States, Senor de Lima, had arrived in New York and would sail for Madrid the next day. Why? Through the unjustness and hatred of the American people toward Spain. This organ of the Spanish did not tell the people of Havana that De Lima was expelled from Washington and from the United States by the justly indignant demand of the American people, and by the more direct orders of the Department of State. This paper did not censure the Spanish minister for having written scurrilous letters in which he had insulted the President of

the United States and Americans generally. Oh, no!

To-night in Havana the cry "Down with Americans!" was heard everywhere. "Down with the American pigs!" cried both soldiers and officers. It was a bad night for Americans in that city of hot-headed, impetuous, quick-hating people.

In the harbor, however, there was an unusual hush. At half-past eight o'clock the Spanish armed cruiser Alphonso XII. was towed to an anchorage further up the harbor. She had lain within a few hundred feet of the United States battleship Maine. Now she was fully six hundred feet away.

The Maine was visiting Havana Harbor on no special mission—merely one of the visits of courtesy which our ships

make at different times in foreign ports. The sailors on board watched the change of anchorage made by the Alphonso XII. The anchorage of a ship had never before been changed at night in Havana Harbor.

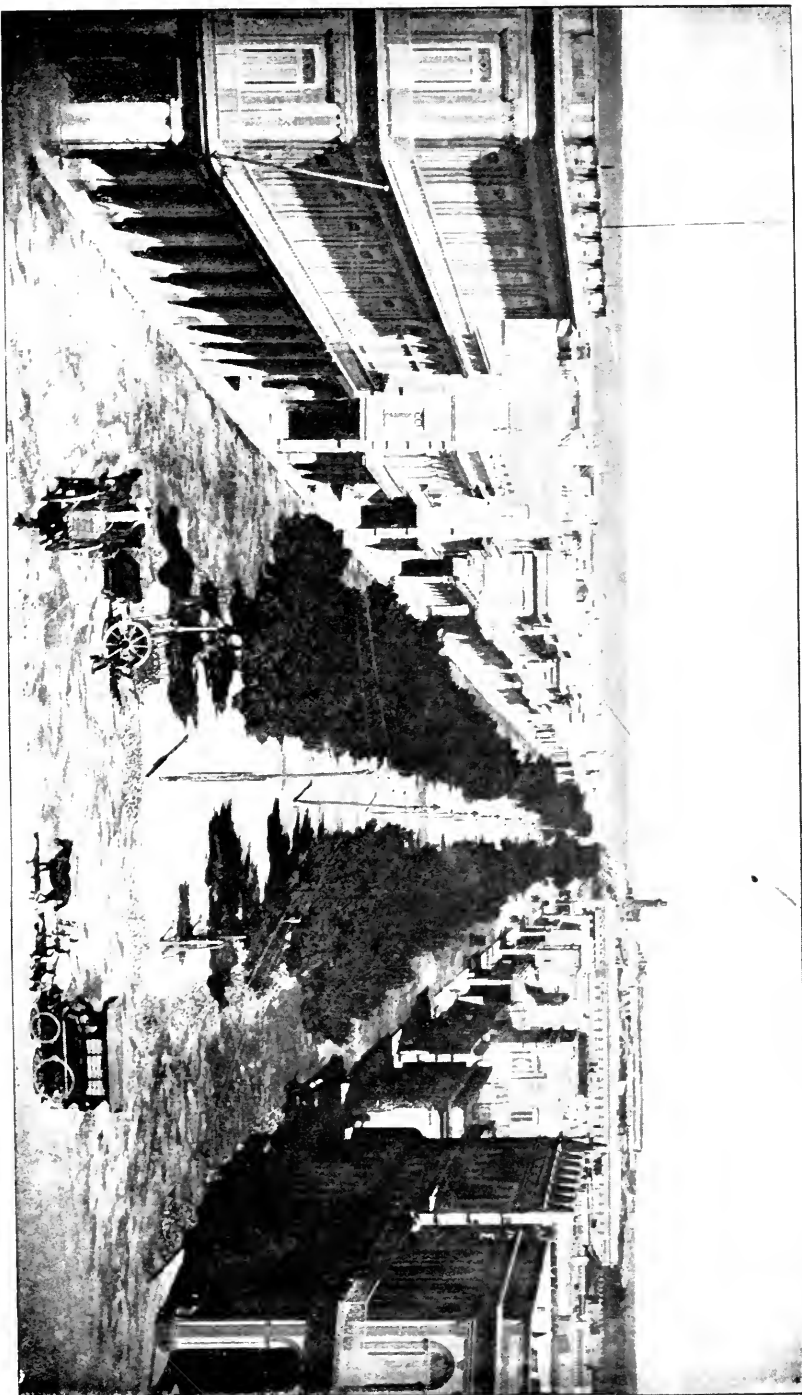
"Why?" the sailor boys on the Maine asked each other. Most of the poor fellows who asked that question never received an answer.

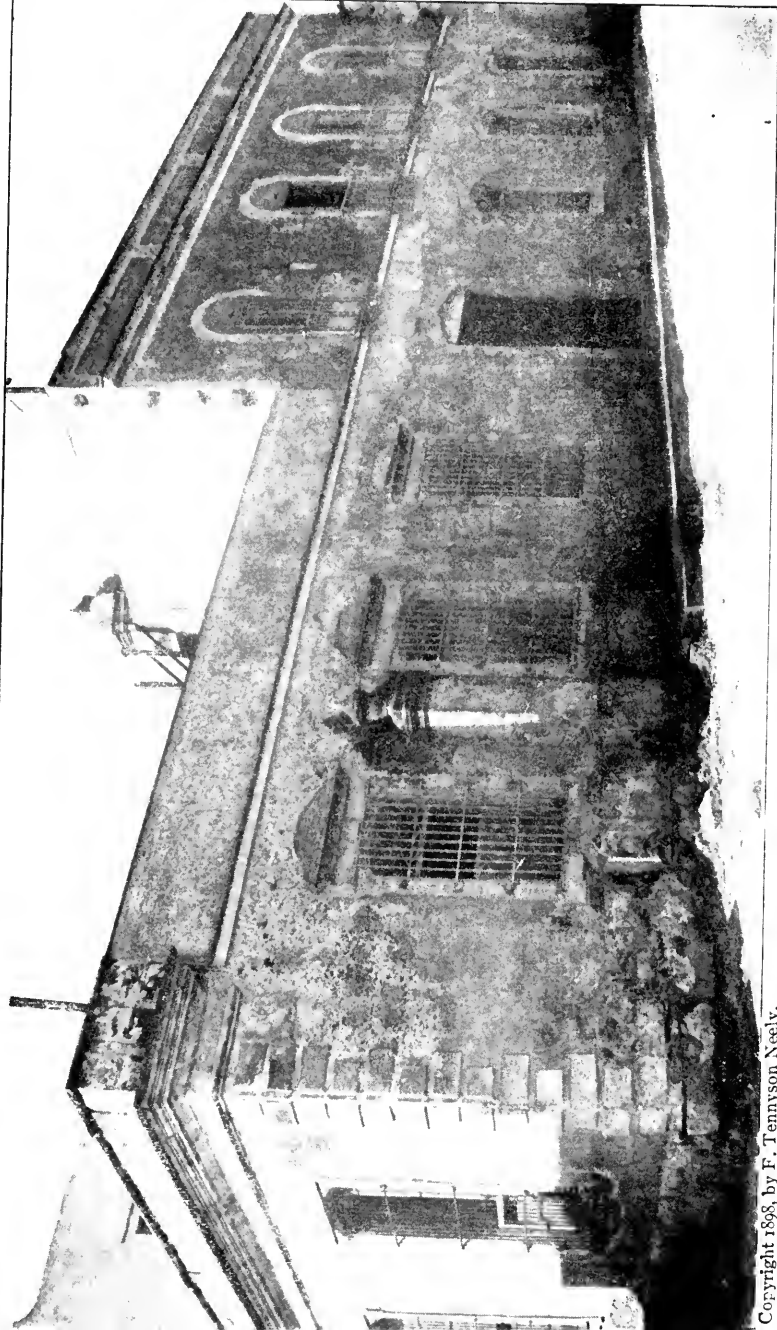
At the Machina, the wharf in front of the navy yard, lay a small launch. She flew the Spanish flag at her stern and gave other indications that she was an official boat. She was the launch which plied between the navy yard and Morro Castle. At this particular moment she had orders to wait for the Senor Lieutenant Casses, the governing officer of Morro. next to the commandante.

The sailor who acted as engineer sat

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In Havana streets. The Prado, Havana's Fifth Avenue, as it is during the hours of the siesta. Lighthouse of





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In Havana streets. Women's prison for political prisoners. This is where Cuban women are confined when accused of conspiracy against the government.

with his hand near the throttle of the tiny engine, asleep. Another sailor, the steersman, sat in the stern near the tiller, yawning.

A noise awakened them. It was the guards challenging some one who wished to enter the navy yard. Then the sailors heard the tramp, tramp of feet. The next moment a file of soldiers came to halt on the edge of the wharf by the launch.

The sailors were now very wide-awake. They were not to carry to Morro Castle only Senor Lieutenant Casses. Another passenger they were to have—a prisoner. The prisoner's arms were tied together at the elbows behind his back. He seemed a very young man, a mere boy. He was in evening dress. Evidently he had been dragged from the gayety of a ball. He had indeed.

The prisoner stepped aboard, the lieutenant followed.

The squad of soldiers were given the order, "Right about face," and marched back toward the city.

At the same time the launch started across the harbor toward Morro Castle.

In the narrow and dark street leading to the Machina there was a rattle of wheels and the clapity-clap of galloping horses. Three victorias drew up at the gates. Six people, three men and three women, rushed up to the sentry.

The youngest man of the party addressed the sentry, hurriedly but politely.

"May we enter? A prisoner has just been brought here?"

"The prisoner has gone, senor."

“Gone? Where?”

“To Morro, senior.”

“But a grave mistake has been made. A Frenchman has been arrested—mistaken for a Cuban girl. That person was not Anita Verona. It was a Count de Granville,” explained Dick. “We must pass,” he insisted, “we want a boat.”

“It is too late, senior. Boats are not allowed to leave the wharf at night.”

“But that boat just left.”

“That was official, senior.”

“Official? Whose boat was it?”

“The prisoner is in the custody of Lieutenant Casses, the second officer in command of Morro Castle, senior.”

Dick gasped. “Casses, did you say? Good God! Friends, Anita is in the hands of a villain who will not spare

her. Something must be done at once. I thought if we could overtake that boat I could bribe the officer and get Anita back. These Spanish soldiers and their officers will do anything for gold. But Anita is in the hands of Casses. You all remember Anita's story of Ceuta prison colony. You therefore know that in arresting Anita this man Casses is accomplishing something more than mere duty. He has personal reasons — revenge."

After a few minutes' further parley with the sentry, Dick gave up the chase in that quarter and ordered the whole party to follow him to the public wharf.

"Now, see here," said Dick, as they hurried on. "There's no use chasing that Lieutenant Casses, for there's no hope of obtaining Anita's escape

through bribing him. Now, here's a plan. Sir Charles, you take the ladies—don't cry, Daisy dear, Anita's as safe as the don himself—take the ladies, I say, Sir Charles, drive like the deuce and find the American consul. He lives at the Hotel Inglaterra. Wake him up. Tell him what has happened and ask if he can help us. There is evidence against the poor old don, of course. But they have nothing of which they can accuse the Count de Granville. Hurry! Meanwhile, the senator and myself will get ourselves rowed out to the Maine—we will go aboard and see what the captain of one of Uncle Sam's battleships can do for us."

They had by this time reached the public wharf.

CHAPTER XV.

ALL the boats that ply the harbor by day were moored along the public wharf in a long line. Here and there in a boat lay its owner, asleep. Dick shouted, rousing them all at the same time. The boatmen sprang up, then climbed ashore and crowded around the party, asking them what they wanted. When told somebody wished to be rowed to the Maine, they threw up their hands, a sign of helplessness, and shrugged their shoulders. No boats were allowed to leave any wharf in Havana at night.

“All right,” exclaimed Dick at last. “Sir Charles, you hurry to the consul. Senator, you go with Sir Charles and

the ladies. For I am going to tackle the Maine end of this alone."

All this time Dick had been disrobing. He had thrown off his coat, waistcoat, collar and tie, and was now attacking his shoes.

"Gatling guns and doomed demons!" roared Sir Charles. "What are you up to, Dick?"

"Going to swim out to the Maine and—ye Gods!——"

The end of his sentence could not be heard. Out of the stillness of the harbor had come an uproar, a crushing and a banging, indescribably frightful. There is no sound in human experience awful enough to compare to the detonation of that moment. The sky was glowing and the air was full of flying missiles.

An explosion! An explosion more

dreadful and with more tragic results than could at first be imagined.

What were the missiles flying in every direction only to fall into the water and sink? They were huge guns and small spars, bits of rope and pieces of iron and—human bodies.

Our party on the wharf were wild with excitement and terror and the agony of helplessness.

“Good God!” shrieked Dick. “It is the Maine. She’s been blown up and what is left of her is on fire!”

The uproar, the screams of mortal agony, the flaring of demon flames, the continued crash as of millions of iron plates being hurled into heaps, were as horrible as terrible.

Dick and Sir Charles and the senator sprang each into a boat. They had no

need to offer the boatmen money, for harbor laws were forgotten; all thought only of the laws of common humanity. Each of our party took a hand at the oars. They were pulling not for their own lives, but to save others.

For once, these ever-gallant gentlemen left ladies alone at night in a public place. The ladies had insisted, and bravely and eagerly awaited the first demand for their services.

“If we do not come ashore in one hour,” called Dick to the ladies, “make one of these boatmen row you out to the Tramp. If things are bad, if there are many hurt, we will need you on the Tramp as nurses. The Tramp is the nearest American ship to the wreck and we will use her as a hospital.”

The three boats had pulled out in the

midst of the floating *débris* and floundering men crying for help. Sir Charles and the senator took in every poor fellow, alive or dead, as they came across him.

Dick, correspondent of the New York *Diurnal*, with the biggest and most tragic story of his life to get to New York that night, pulled out direct to the burning Maine. On his way he kept shouting first in English and then in Spanish:

“Take all men picked up to the Tramp, the American yacht lying near the Maine.”

An hour later he boarded the Tramp.

His offer of the Tramp as hospital had been accepted, and wounded men were being brought aboard as fast as possible. Every berth was already filled, and the men were now laid on the deck. Sir

Charles, the senator and the ladies were all on board, doing what they could to relieve the agony of the victims of the disaster.

“Can’t stop to tell you much,” shouted Dick excitedly. “I must get ashore, rush up to the Spanish censor and get him to hold the wire open while I write down the facts. I’ve seen more in the last hour than could be told in forty columns. The Maine has probably been blown up—from outside, you know. Entire forward part of the ship blown to a misshapen mass. Two hundred and fifty sailors dead or missing. Officers all saved but two. I’ll be back in an hour.”

“We have one man here,” said Sir Charles, detaining the busy correspondent. “By what is left of his uniform he appears to be a Spanish officer. He

was stunned and drowning when we picked him up, but is better now. The man recovered consciousness just in time to beg us not to bring him aboard. He wanted to be taken ashore. Says he has friends on shore and we are all enemies. A personal matter seems to grieve him more than the wreck of the Maine. He claims to have lost papers which were worth a fortune in cash."

The officer lay stretched on the deck, his head pillowed on a coil of rope. He was conscious, said he would recover; but even as he spoke he sank into unconsciousness.

"Who is he?" asked Dick. And the correspondent began searching the man's clothing for a card or any scrap of paper that might identify him.

The man's neck was bare. On each

side of that neck Dick noticed a peculiar discoloration of the skin, marks about the size of a silver dollar and as blue as indigo.

"Those are marks carried for life by a man whom somebody has strangled nearly to death," said Dick. "I'll bet I know who he is."

Just then the man was again momentarily conscious.

"You are Lieutenant Casses?" asked Dick excitedly.

"I am," the man said. "And may you be damned for a thief. Where are my papers? Where is my prisoner?"

About this time, in the heart of the city, la Senora Isabella drove to the station of the Havana and Matanzas Railroad. She sent the following tele-

gram to the commandante of the forts surrounding each station on the line:

“If unknown man or woman disembarks midnight train from Havana at your station, do not molest but follow him or her secretly, with largest force of men you can muster.”

CHAPTER XVI.

EVENTS very important to this narrative were yet to happen on the night of that memorable 15th of February. Or rather the events which follow can be said, more appropriately, to have occurred on the morning of the 16th.

At half-past four that morning a company of insurgents might have been found encamped on a small coral island off the coast of Cuba, a few miles from Matanzas, as you come toward Havana. Matanzas is about seventy-five miles from Havana. It is to the capital of Cuba what Philadelphia is to New York. It is a four hours' ride by the Havana and Matanzas railroad.

The forty insurgents encamped on the coral island already referred to were all awake. Not a man had slept either that night or the night before. They were few, and the ears and eyes of each were needed. Why were they there, those forty men? Apparently, it was a barren place, of no value and of no importance. In reality, it was for the insurgents at that time of the greatest and most vital consequence. This was the island chosen by Don Alphonso de Castro as a landing-place for his filibustering expedition. It was the place chosen by him and the captains of his seven vessels as an armory, a magazine and a supply station. Here were hidden, presumably safely, arms, ammunition for seventy thousand rebels, and food enough to feed the seventy thousand for more than two

months. And all this valuable property was being guarded by only forty men.

Only forty men. Why not more? More than a corporal's guard might attract attention. Even forty were too many. For with mountains of food on that island, food was scarce. The boxes of supplies were carefully hidden, not a package was in sight. These men were prepared for discovery and attack. They were ready to die, if need be. But the hiding-place of the arms, ammunition and food for seventy thousand of their comrades in arms should not be discovered. They were ready to be slaughtered one by one rather than reveal the hiding-place of the stores sent by the beloved don.

The seven ships had reached them the night before, and had unloaded and

sailed away empty and safe. This much had happened just as the don described to the party on the Tramp. The hitch had come not at this end, not with the real filibustering ships, but with the seven make-believers at Havana. How had those few cases of arms been loaded on the Havana ships? Those few cases had furnished the incriminating evidence that sent Don Alphonso to Morro Castle. The only difference his incarceration had made in this company of forty guardsmen on the coral island was grief for the don and the crews of his ships, and the presence of a number of cases of provisions which had been intended really for the reconcentrados in Havana.

The clothes of the forty could not be said to be a uniform. They were ap-

pareled in rags and broken shoes, the best they had known for months. The only things which all had alike were their weapons—a rifle and a machete. Each carried his rifle perpetually. Each wore his machete buckled at his side.

All of them had long beards, not having felt the razor for weeks. For they had been living on that island a long time, watching and waiting. Their food consisted of uncooked codfish and cornmeal. No coffee. They dared not build a fire.

Still they were waiting. For whom? A scout had crossed to the mainland during the night and learned of the seizure of the don and his seven ships. They had been waiting for the don. He was in prison. Now they were waiting for word from him, for orders. For they

knew the don and believed that he would send a message, or a representative, in some way or other.

Where were the stores? A stranger there would have declared the hiding of anything on that island an impossibility. In the center of the place, which was, perhaps, the size of a two-acre lot—was a sort of coral hill. Coral is porous. Some of its pores are big holes, other pores are caverns. The hill in the center of the island was a cavern. It formed a sort of fort and would be useful in case of attack. The stores? Were hidden in this fort? No! They were buried, drowned in the little inlet that separated the island from the mainland. Who would think of searching the bottom of a river bed for stores? No wonder the packages had been unloaded in a single

night. They had simply been thrown overboard. For the don had had each case packed in a coating of lead and hermetically sealed. It was the most novel idea ever conceived by filibusters.

The forty waited and watched, and strung themselves out along the edge of the island that faced the mainland. Only one or two watched the side toward the sea.

At the hour named, half-past four, day had just begun to break through the night. The sky at the moment was all white, the earth all black. The forty were all smoking. The lighted ends of cigars and cigarettes gleamed in the blackness like live coals. A Cuban will starve cheerfully, but take away his cigar and he is perfectly miserable.

Of a sudden the human and vigilant

line along the inlet heard a whistle. It was like the chirping of a bobolink. The whistle was repeated. Forty hammers of forty rifles clicked.

"Who comes there?" called the sergeant of the guard.

"Friends," came back the answer.

"Countersign," called the sergeant.

"Anita, the Cuban spy," was the answer.

Forty hammers of forty rifles were immediately lowered again to half-lock.

The countersign as given was evidently correct. They recognized the words and were eager to receive the "friend."

"Can you swim?" the sergeant called.
"We have no boat."

The answer was a splash in the water. Three minutes later a human form climbed out of the water to the bank.

The guard said, "Welcome. What is the news?"

"The don is in prison," said the newcomer, with chattering teeth.

"We know that," said the sergeant.

All this time not one of the forty had moved from his post. Something unusual had happened, but the sergeant had not given his men the order to break ranks.

"The crew of his seven vessels are in Morro Castle with the don," said the newcomer.

"We know that," the sergeant repeated.

"Well, then, my man," the stranger said, laughing, "I will tell you no more news till you supply me with a dry suit of clothes."

"Welcome," the sergeant responded,

throwing off his ragged coat and kneeling to remove his shoes.

"One moment," the stranger said, kneeling by the sergeant and whispering.

"Santa Maria!" exclaimed the insurgent, springing to his feet. "Men, break ranks and welcome La Senorita Anita Verona, representative of Senor Don Alphonso and your chief.

The men rushed forward and crowded round the senorita. As yet, however, it was too dark to see her face. As it was they carried her to the coral cavern, threw coats, shirts, trousers and shoes at her feet and left her to put them on. Where those men raised an extra pair of trousers from was a mystery until one of the party at daylight was discovered wearing a blanket wrapped around his legs, after the manner of an Indian.

Day came, broad daylight. Anita came out of the cavern and the men gathered round. Then she told her story, a story that made the men rally round her and gaze at her with their black, lynx eyes full of admiration and pride. She was, indeed, Anita, the Cuban spy.

Before beginning the story of the blowing up of the United States battleship Maine, and her escape from the clutches of her old persecutor of the Island of Ceuta, Lieutenant Casses, she outlined to the men the plans she and the don had made for the distribution of the ammunition and food and clothing to seventy thousand insurgents. It was a gigantic undertaking. Not ten thousand insurgents were in the field in all Cuba. Where were the remaining sixty

thousand to come from? By sending soldiers from town to town enlisting recruits. When told that their pay was guaranteed, that they would have food to eat, medical attendance and clothes on their backs, the men of Cuba would be more willing to fight.

"But the story of last night," the sergeant interrupted. "How did you escape?"

"Ah, sergeant," said Anita. "I would like to have stayed there in Havana Harbor and nurse those wounded and dying sailors. Hundreds of them were sleeping in their hammocks when they were hurled to their death. A bigger noise I never heard. Even the waters of the harbor seemed to be shaken as by an earthquake. The launch in which Senor Casses was taking me to Morro

was steaming between the Maine and the Tramp. The Tramp is the yacht which brought me to Cuba. Just then the explosion occurred. Somehow, I know not exactly how, our boat was broken into splinters. Perhaps the two soldiers who manned her were drowned. I do not know. I only know that I suddenly found myself in the water. My arms were tied behind my back. Holy Virgin! I felt myself sinking. What could I do with my arms shackled together? I came to the surface and gave one cry. I was about to sink again when I thought of a trick I learned years ago. It was to float. I managed to get flat on the water, and surely enough I floated. In the general confusion a boatman picked me up. He thought I was a man and he thought me dead. I proved to

him that I was alive. I asked him to please untie my arms. He did so. The boatman was nearly mad with excitement. Exactly as I wanted him. I told him to row me across the harbor, that I lived over there, that I would like to go home. He rowed. Bless that boatman! He landed me within a few yards of the railroad station. I thanked him and ran away. The regular train to Matanzas had been blown up early in the evening—train entirely demolished. I remembered that another train had been advertised to leave at midnight. That must be my train! I should have sent word to my friends that I was safe, but I dared not. To go back to Havana would have resulted in my recapture. I therefore had to get that train. But I could not embark in my wet clothes.

They would excite suspicion and I was unknown. I challenged the first man on the street to change clothes. Mine, though wet, were of the finest texture, though the coat was made to wear only in the evening. I had lots of money in my pockets, thanks to the *New York Diurnal*. You have all read of what that paper did and did not do for me. Well, I offered the man one hundred dollars in gold for his clothes. I stipulated that he must take me to his house, leave the clothes in a room for me, and go away while I changed. The plan worked beautifully. Merciful Virgin! what's that?"

The forty insurgents had gathered round their sergeant and the senorita. They sat in a bunch on the ground, dipping shredded codfish into cornmeal and

eating it with their fingers. The choice pieces were given to Anita, their heroine.

The only moment in all the weeks they had passed on that island—the only moment in which they had relaxed their vigilance was this present one. Absorbed in Anita's story, they had forgotten the narrow inlet and its secret. They had forgotten that the mainland was within rifle shot and that they were sitting exposed to any eye on the opposite bank.

At the moment Anita cried, "What's that?" a shower of bullets rained among them and two of the forty brave ones fell back dead, with the codfish they were going to eat clinched in their hands.

The remaining soldiers rushed into the coral cavern, dragging their dead comrades with them. Anita seized the two

rifles belonging to the dead men, and was the last to enter the little cavern.

But now that they were in the fort, how were they to shoot at the enemy? They had had just time enough to perceive on the opposite bank a force of Spanish soldiers, ten times their own number. Four hundred to forty. What were they to do? How to fight? How to defend? How to drive back?

Their only hope lay in the fact that the enemy had no boats. If they swam across they might get their rifles and ammunition wet. While they were swimming the insurgents would shoot. Thus they reasoned—that little band of now less than forty.

One of the men stepped out of the cavern's opening, took aim, and fired. A yell from the opposite bank told him

that his shot had hit its mark. But that brave, perhaps rash, man did not return to the cavern. A hundred bullets were buried in his body. Riddled like a sieve he fell in his tracks, barricading the coral opening. Evidently the insurgents could not fight that way. They had nothing to do at present but to await the pleasure of the enemy.

They had not long to wait. A splashing was heard in the water. The insurgents knew the Spanish had begun to swim.

"Charge!" cried the sergeant. The little garrison made a sortie and fired at the swimmers. At the same time the reserves on the opposite bank fired a volley into the rebel ranks.

They had evidently killed many of the swimmers. But when they rushed back



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Havana. An evening custom. A Cuban window; no glass windows



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Scene in Prado, near Inglaterra Hotel. Showing Spanish soldiers on their way to guard mount at nine a. m.

into their fort to reload they left ten men dead on the coral bank. Beside the dead, fifteen of those in the fort were wounded, some mortally. Two men gone, then ten more. Add to that fifteen more disabled and they had left only thirteen who were able to handle a rifle. Anita, of course, made fourteen.

What was to be done?

Another sortie would surely finish them.

Ah! let the enemy come. There was only one opening into the cavern. As the Spanish soldiers came up the insurgents would shoot them one by one.

But, meantime, what had happened? They heard the Spaniards shouting like so many maniacs.

"They have discovered the stores," said the sergeant. "When we fired at

their swimmers one fellow at least took a dive. He landed on something solid. He dived again to investigate. He told his comrades and they all dived. They have discovered that the whole bed of the inlet is floored with leaden cases. Those Spaniards are enemies, but they are not fools. Some one has informed them of our hiding-place and told them that not only men but stores are here."

The shouting continued. The insurgents could hear the Spanish officers yelling orders. "Go to the village! Bring ropes and chains and mules and carts."

Such were the orders.

While the fatigue party went for the necessary things to raise and carry off the supplies, the men left to do the fighting had evidently determined to fight.

The little band of fourteen insurgents heard a splashing far greater than the previous one.

In a few minutes they heard shouts on the coral bank.

“Stand ready to fire,” commanded the sergeant.

The Spanish soldiers rushed upon the coral fort in a body. A deadly volley poured out of the opening. They retreated, leaving a heap of dead and wounded.

Horrible warfare! To kill and to get killed! The insurgents inside could shoot. The Spaniards outside had no human targets to shoot at. The opening was only wide enough to admit one man at a time.

Suddenly there was silence outside. A corresponding silence inside.

A voice on the outside said, "Brave men of Cuba, surrender. We are ten to your one. We have your supplies. You have nothing more to fight for to-day. Surrender—on promise of life and proper treatment. Fight, and we promise you death."

"We have a woman here," roared the sergeant. "We will surrender the woman to save her life. We men prefer to die."

"Let the woman stand forth," said the voice outside. "We are not fighting women."

Anita protested indignantly. No, she preferred death to the treatment she would get at the hands of the Spanish soldiers. No, she would not budge.

Some of the men stepped forward to drag her out, anything to save her from

the horrible butchery that must soon take place.

Anita drew the machete which early in the fight she had taken from a dead comrade and buckled at her waist. She poised the machete — awful weapon, broad and sharp—threateningly and said:

“Men of Cuba, I love you. But the first man who lays hands on me receives this knife in his body. I have said that I prefer to die with you—not with the Spaniards. I know them too well.”

“Ah, senorita,” said the sergeant. “Lower your machete. You will not have to use it. We are not brutes. Die—if you can.”

And the sergeant gave hurried orders in a tone too low for Anita to understand.

Immediately the men, that brave band

of thirteen, rushed one by one out of the coral opening.

Each man as he rushed through had time to fire his rifle once. Then he fell, riddled with bullets.

Anita was alone.

She now stepped out, her rifle ready, prepared like her comrades to shoot just once and to die.

As she raised her rifle a heavy blow sent it flying from her hands.

At the same time she heard the order, "Cease firing."

Anita was beautiful. She was young. Spanish soldiers do not kill beautiful young women. Their shots are saved for the old and the ugly.

An officer stepped to Anita's side and bowed.

"Senorita Anita Verona, I have the

honor of knowing you. I have also the honor of protecting you as a prisoner of Spain."

Anita's lip curled. She recognized this officer.

"Senor Colonel Garcia, I remember you as the man who ordered my father and my sister shot in the doorway of our home. Can you expect mercy from my father's daughter?" And whisking the machete from its scabbard she made a lunge at the colonel.

That gallant officer, however, had sprung out of the way of the murderous Anita.

Before she could make another lunge the machete was snatched from Anita's hand by a soldier.

Again her arms were tied together at the elbows, behind her back.

"But don't hurt or mar the pretty rebel," ordered the colonel. And he winked at his fellow-officers significantly.

For the third time Anita was a prisoner. She was termed a menace to the welfare of Spain. This time she was taken in the act of bearing arms against her country. This time she was a prisoner of war—and prisoner of war, in Cuba, means hardship, want, exposure, hunger, torture—and, for a woman, things worse than those mentioned and wholly unmentionable.

The supplies seized, the don's expeditions both failures, the don himself in Morro Castle, and forty brave men of Cuba just slain before her eyes, no prospect but death for herself, no hope for the independence of Cuba, Anita was

hopeless, despairing. As her arms were helpless, the soldiers carried her across the inlet to the mainland of ruined Cuba. As her feet touched the soil she realized that she had begun a wretched existence as a prisoner of war. She wept. But the tears suddenly turned to ice on her cheeks.

For before her stood Lieutenant Casses.

CHAPTER XVII.

Now began the most dreadful period of Anita's life—days of burnings and butchery, nights of horror and outrage, an extended carnival of gore and ghastliness. At the beginning of the rebellion she had seen her father and her sister shot in the doorway of their home—shot by the soldiers of this same Colonel Garcia, into whose merciless hands fate had given her, a prisoner. They carried her father and sister away, whether already dead or yet suffering Anita did not know. The shock killed her mother, and on the same day Anita was sent to the Isle of Pines. From there she was sent to Ceuta, on the African coast,

where she passed two years—two years of torture. But all the horrible scenes she witnessed there, all the shedding of blood she had seen since, all these were as nothing to the outrages and murders which she beheld now, on her march as a prisoner of war from Coral Island to Matanzas.

At the sight of Lieutenant Casses she shrank away, as from a leper. She had only one consolation, that she was not now Casses' prisoner, but Colonel Garcia's. For even her father's murderer, Garcia, had a reputation for occasional fairness, while Casses was never known to resort to kindness when there was the slightest chance of profit in cruelty.

Even this single consolation was denied Anita.

“You think you are Garcia's property,

hey?" Casses hissed in her ear. "Well, my Count de Granville, you might as well know that you are not his property, but mine. I took good care to bring papers authorizing the delivery of your person to me. My Count de Granville, you escaped again last night, didn't you? Well, escape once more if you can. For by all the saints, I'll keep you this time—or kill you. So you are still in men's clothes, hey! Well, then, as long as you wish to be a man, we will treat you as one of such, you strangling"—and he called her by the worst of names. Then turning to a soldier he added, "Sergeant, hitch up this prisoner with the rest. If he won't march, why, you know what to do."

Such was the true nature of Casses. After his treachery and his narrow

escape from death by Anita's strangling arms at Ceuta, he had asked the war department of Spain to transfer him to Cuba. He had come hoping to meet Anita. And his hopes had two reasons. First, to get the Cuban girl to sign over the claims to her American fortune to him. He had brought the papers with him, secretly, from Ceuta. Second, revenge. He had hoped to get the fortune before beginning his revenge. But now the papers lay at the bottom of Havana Harbor. Anita's signature was no longer of any consequence to him. Now this manly Spanish lieutenant looked upon Anita as simply a she-dog who had once bitten him and whom he meant to kick as often as he chose till he should throw her into an underground kennel in Morro Castle.

But how did Casses come to be at Coral Island? We last saw him lying on the deck of the Tramp, damning Sir Charles Bluntly and Senator Van Holland for saving him from drowning. The blowing up the Maine was nothing to him. He had lost his papers and his prisoner—that is, his fortune and his vengeance. Therefore he had lost everything. It maddened him, made him well and strong. He sprang up, left the Tramp, hurried ashore and sought Isabella. From that beautiful and successful spy he learned that Anita had reached shore and left Havana by the midnight train on the Matanzas railroad. Just then a telegram was handed Isabella:

“Stranger got off at Guadaloupe. Took coast road toward Coral Island. Entire garrison four hundred following.”

Ten minutes later Lieutenant Casses ordered the railroad to furnish him with a locomotive as far as Guadaloupe. He arrived at the shore, as we have seen, just as Anita was brought across the inlet.

Obedying the lieutenant's order to "hitch her up" with the other prisoners, the sergeant now led her away.

"But the men over there on the island," she said, turning back to Casses. "Some of them are only wounded. Surely you will not leave them there to die."

Colonel Garcia, who had been listening, answered: "That's so, pretty bird, that's so. They are not dead. Here, corporal" — and the colonel gave an order in a low tone.

The corporal and a squad of four men

swam across the inlet to the island. Anita saw them walk deliberately up to the wounded men, place the muzzle of a rifle in the mouth of each in turn and—Anita, terrified, turned away. But she heard the shots and knew that all was over.

Such is war in Cuba; a war that is not a war, for it has not been recognized as such. As the Cubans are not belligerents they are simply considered by the Spanish as so many bandits. If any of those forty brave men on Coral Island had been only slightly wounded, they would have been taken prisoners—for prisoners are always useful. They can be made to do all the hard work in a Spanish camp. But badly wounded, no! They are no use as prisoners. As a rule the Spanish do not waste even the bul-

lets that would end the lives and the misery of the badly wounded. But in this instance Garcia and Casses wished to impress Anita—the most notorious of women rebels on the island of Cuba, they had heard the men on Coral Island call her. The Spanish officers took great pleasure in killing off her admirers.

“Whose are you now, my pretty bird?” the colonel asked.

“Mine!” Casses answered, glaring at the colonel.

“Yours, lieutenant? Well, she doesn’t look as if she belonged to anybody at this particular moment, in that insurgent suit of clothes. A girl in masculine rags! Ho, ho, my pretty bird, the lieutenant here says you are his, but I rather think you women prefer a colonel, every time, hey?”

Casses again glanced at his superior officer. The colonel only laughed. Evidently there would be trouble between those two men, because of their prisoner. Anita perceived the situation and took advantage of it. She knew that a difference between these two men would save her. She said:

“Colonel, I would rather be a prisoner for life in your charge than to be in the charge of Senor Casses for an hour. Colonel, you are a warrior, but you are also a man.”

“Ho, ho, lieutenant,” laughed the colonel, “the Senorita Anita does not appear to enjoy your holding the keys to her liberty.” The colonel, as Anita supposed, was susceptible to flattery and began at once acting upon the quality of manliness which Anita had

attributed to him. "Lieutenant," he added significantly, "notwithstanding that you have a written warrant for the person of the senorita, she shall still be in the charge of my men during the march to Matanzas." And the colonel rode away.

Casses' eyes were full of blackest hatred. On his brow there was that which denotes murderous and revengeful thoughts.

The sergeant who had led Anita away now untied her arms. Oh! the feeling of relief! It lasted but a moment. For the sergeant, with a still stronger rope, tied her to one of the prisoners.

All the prisoners were now bound in couples with ropes that held their elbows tightly behind them. They were mostly young men, evidently Cubans. By their

conversation Anita soon learned that they were Cubans of the upper classes—that is, lawyers, physicians, bankers and landholders. But all were ragged, dirty and half-starved. Some were bare-footed; others wore *alpargatas*, canvas shoes with rope soles. Many of them already showed symptoms of various diseases. There was not a man of sound appearance among them. All this while the four hundred, or rather the three hundred-odd soldiers, for the brave forty on Coral Island had not fired their last shots in vain, had been cooking breakfast. There was bacon and coffee. All had their rations — except the prisoners. They were given nothing.

Casses, passing Anita as if by accident, said: “You do not need breakfast, hey? They tell me you were eating codfish

with your—your forty lovers, when we gave you that surprise party.”

Just then Colonel Garcia came along. “Ho, ho! lieutenant, making things pleasant for my pretty bird? Ho, ho! there, sergeant, who tied those knots? Well, untie them, let the bird have her wings. How dare you tie my pretty bird to a dog! Loosen her, I say. Now give her some coffee and meat and then give her a mount. Sergeant, these are my orders.” And the colonel lighted a big cigar and walked away.

The march began. The string of prisoners, in couples as described, were guarded on either side by files of soldiers. Behind them came Anita, on a mule. At the rear came the regular column.

Anita, looking back, saw Casses and

Garcia riding their horses side by side, in close conversation. She shuddered. What were they planning now?

After a two hours' march they entered the shade of a grove of palms. The colonel halted. All the prisoners were untied. Not a word was said. Evidently it was the custom to give prisoners a little liberty in camp. The prisoners wandered off, each looking back furtively, as if unaccustomed to this free use of their limbs. At last they disappeared in all directions. Anita remained where she was, wondering. She gathered some grass for her mule. The camp itself seemed nearly deserted. Out of more than three hundred men only the officers seemed to be in the camp. Of a sudden shots were heard, a volley; another volley and shrieks; then

one more volley, followed by shouts and brutal laughter. A few minutes later the soldiers came pouring back into camp, evil expressions on their already hideous faces.

When the column resumed the march Anita was the only prisoner. Her fellow-Cubans had been murdered in cold blood. Too horrified to ask one question, to utter one protest, she rode on, hating and hopeless and dizzy.

The colonel rode up to her. "We have sent your comrades in another direction, my pretty bird. We thought the dogs were no fit company for you. They were hungry and they might eat you. When you are lonesome, call on the colonel."

Later Casses reined up by her side. "You see," he said, "our prisons are

full. That is the way we have of reducing the congestion. That is the way we ought to treat all you bandit devils, Anita, love. Love? Yes! there is much love between us, damn you. I gave you your chance last night in that ballroom and again in that accursed harbor. However, even if you had signed the papers they would have been of no use now. They are lost. And besides I should have taken you to Morro anyway. You hate me, don't you? Well, once you loved me, hey? Remember how you asked me to your downy couch of stone in the grotto at Ceuta? Yes, I've told the colonel of our little love episodes — my version of them, you understand."

And Casses spurred his horse on, muttering, "If Garcia's pretty bird ever

takes him under her wing, she'll give him *her* version of the story. Ah, my friend Garcia, to-morrow morning you will roast in hell."

About four o'clock the column entered the town of Ramonita. As the soldiers needed supplies they began looting the few shops in the main street. What they could not carry away they threw into the middle of the road. The shopkeepers begged them to leave what they did not want.

The soldiers laughed. In a house a few yards from the shops lived a family, the father and sons of which were away fighting in the patriot ranks. The eldest daughter, whose husband was also in the Cuban army, was standing on the doorstep with a child in her arms. A Spanish soldier went up to her, and with

a volley of oaths said, "What is that you have in your arms—a little rebel?" Then with his bayonet he tossed the infant across the road, dashing out its brains on the opposite wall. The next moment he transfixed the shrieking woman against the door of her father's house.

An officer who watched the double murder laughed.

Anita, who happened to be near, shrieked. The laughing officer ordered her to "shut up."

On to the next town marched the column. This was the town of Holgrim. As they entered Anita noticed a litter on which lay a wounded Cuban, whom six Spanish soldiers were taking to prison. The poor fellow was groaning piteously, and the soldiers were telling

him to keep quiet. A curious crowd of about fifty men and boys, manifestly all patriots, followed the litter and openly expressed their anger at the brutal remarks of the soldiers. They did not, however, attempt to rescue the prisoner until, just in front of a massive building known as "La Periquesa," the corporal struck the prisoner on the head with the butt of his rifle, stunning him. With a roar the mob rushed upon the soldiers like wild beasts, the light of madness in their eyes. Revolvers and short clubs were suddenly produced, and the citizens attacked the Spaniards savagely. Two of the six soldiers were killed before they had time to realize that their corporal's brutality had goaded the crowd to fury. The four others dropped the

litter, wheeled and fired full into the faces of their assailants.

But that volley was their last. Another moment and they had them, gripping their throats with the tenacity of a monster devil-fish and dashing them to the ground, where they were trampled under foot until every one of them was reduced to a shapeless pulp.

Meanwhile, the shots and shouts had been heard at the barracks, only three blocks away, and shortly afterward a company of soldiers turned the corner on the double-quick. Halting just long enough to fix their bayonets, they charged upon the crowd, expecting it to dissolve at the first touch of cold steel. Those soldiers were probably never more surprised in their lives, for the patriots, instead of flying, rushed to meet them

halfway, and a hand-to-hand fight followed, in which the soldiers got decidedly more than they had expected.

Driven back by the crowd, the soldiers retreated in disorder, but formed again and poured a volley of bullets into the crowd. More than a dozen of the patriots fell, but the crowd, which by this time had been doubled, dashed at the troops again and again, only to receive each time a deadly fire that mowed them down by scores. Fifteen minutes after the first charge two more companies arrived from the barracks and a troop of cavalry dashed around the other corner and charged the crowd in the rear. The patriots, caught fast in the jaws of death, met their fate bravely. At the end of the fight more than a hundred of them were dead or dying, and nearly as many

more were captives. The prisoners were at once sentenced to death by a court-martial. They were shot against the rear wall of the barracks.

All this Anita either actually saw with her own eyes or heard from Casses' brutal lips. He seemed to take a particular and fiendish pleasure in showing how the Spanish conducted warfare.

"You can begin to understand," he said, "how we intend to deal with a prisoner of your own rank and distinction."

Toward night they neared Matanzas. At El Buren, about four miles from the city, the soldiers decided they were hungry and must eat. They halted in front of a plantation. It was in ruins, but just the same the soldiers espied several pigs wallowing near the house.

They ordered the keeper of the place, who sat on the doorstep beside his aged mother, to kill and cook a pig for them. He did so, and after they had eaten the pig he started down the steep hill in front of the house to get them some water from the river. When he was halfway down they deliberately fired upon him from above, shooting him in the back. He fell dead at the foot of the cliff. Then they threw his body at the feet of his aged mother, saying:

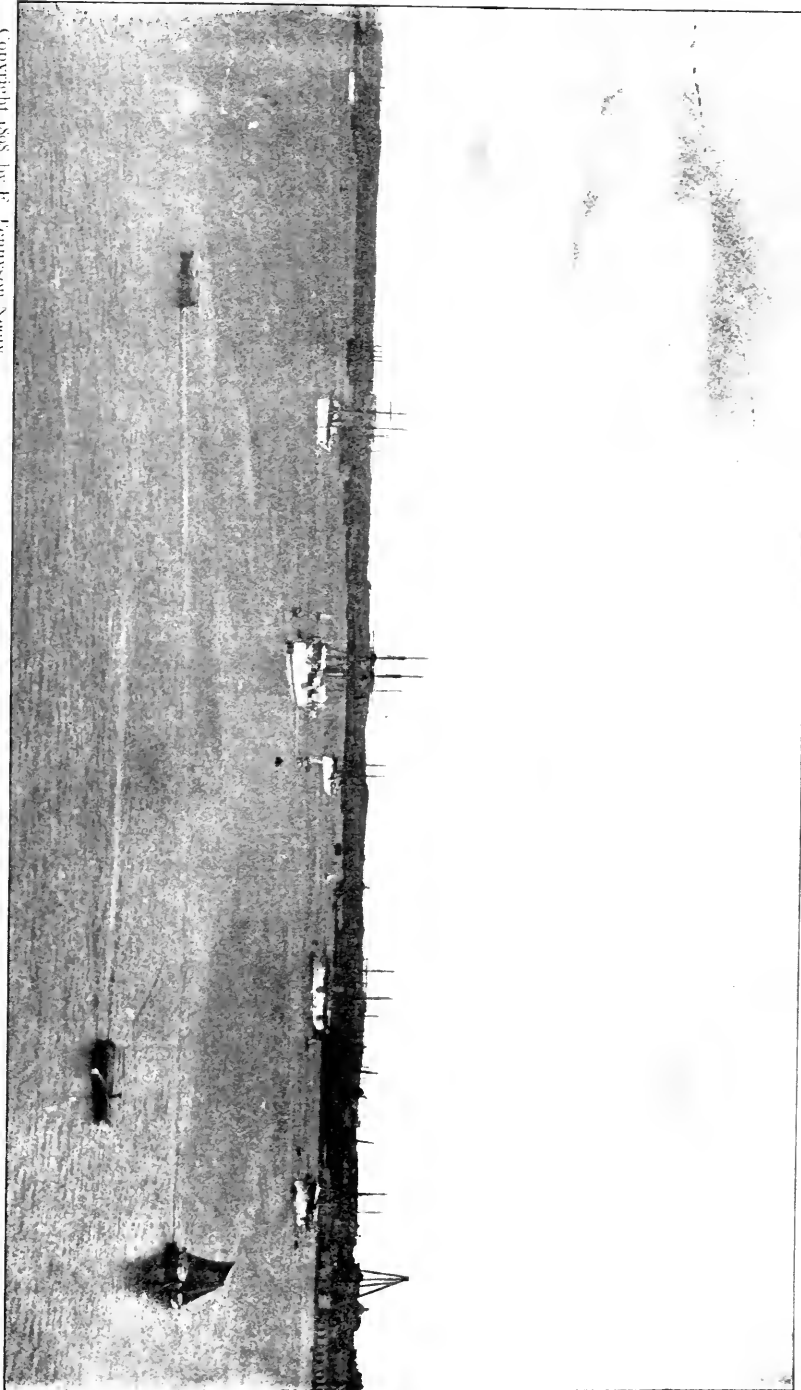
“There is your son; see if he has been hurt.”

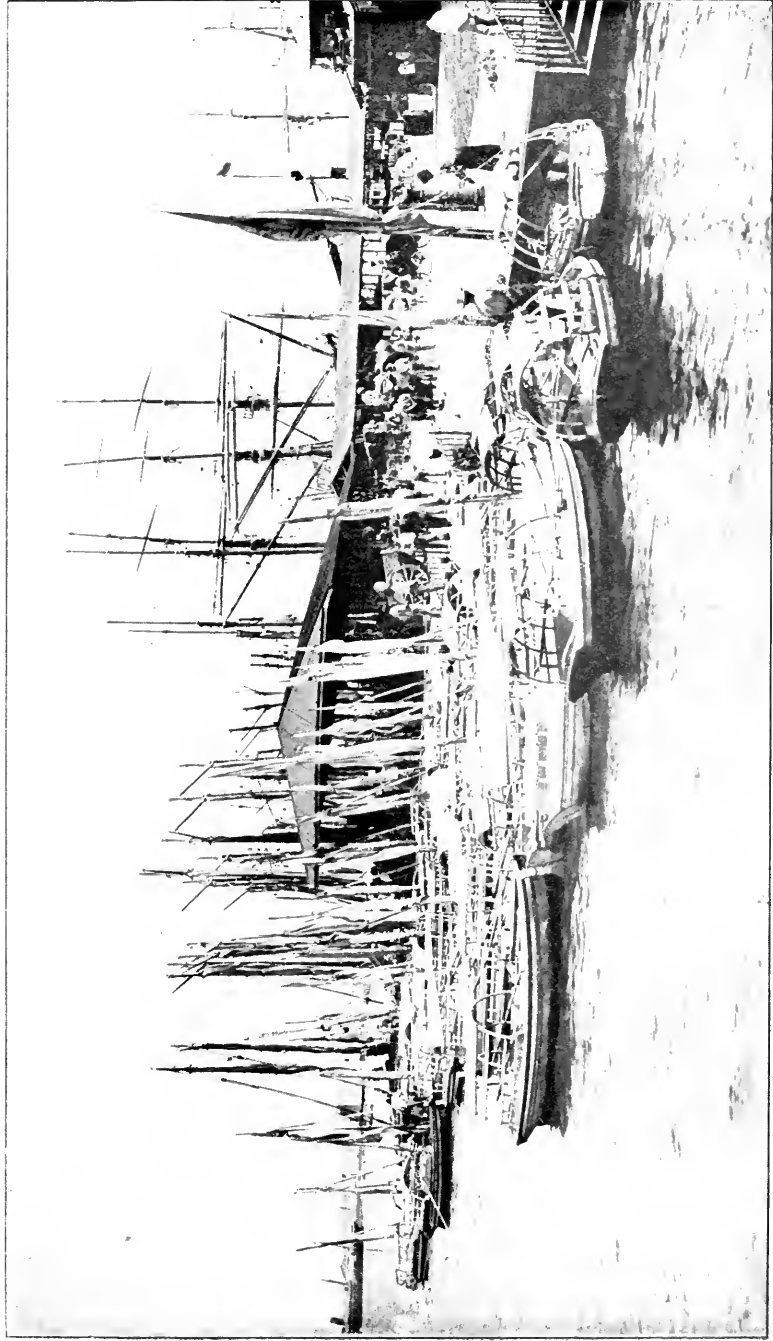
Sickened with the sights of that day, appalled by the horrors she had witnessed, Anita ended that day's march in a state of unconsciousness. It was the first time she had swooned since that awful war began. She had been over-

powered now, simply because she had been helpless to act, to speak, to prevent. Casses and Garcia had evidently determined that this Cuban girl, whose name had been made world-famous by her escape from Ceuta, should see that the only result of the publicity she had given the Cuban war was to make it more bloody and more cruel.

The scenes had proved too much even for her strong physique. At the gate of the town she simply fell from her mule into the road. At the same instant an old man and a young girl, both dirty and in rags, both reduced, through starvation, to skeletons, rushed to the prostrate girl's side. Unheeding the protests of the soldiers these creatures threw themselves upon Anita.

"My daughter!" wailed the old man.





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A cluster of native boats at the upper end of the wharf. Noontime, very warm. The boatmen are all gathered

“My sister!” cried the young girl.

Anita opened her eyes, sat up.
“Donalita — sister!” she gasped. And
then, “My father!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANITA's father and sister were starving, dying for want of a crust of bread.

In Matanzas there was not even a bone for them to gnaw. Twenty thousand others were suffering in the same way. They were called — reconcentrados.

In the second year of the rebellion Captain-General Weyler sent out an edict notifying all the country people to concentrate in the towns.

The country people, non-combatants or pacificos, as they were called, always favored the rebels. When a countryman saw a Spanish column approaching, he would run pellmell to the insurgent

camp and give notice of the enemy's coming. So General Weyler said to these people: "If you want to fight, go fight. If not come into the towns." He gave them eight days to concentrate. All who had not obeyed the order on the ninth day were marched into the nearest town at the point of the bayonet, or else murdered outright.

Since then five hundred thousand reconcentrados, deprived of their property, of all they owned, with no way to earn a living, had died of starvation. There were now five hundred thousand left. Of these, two hundred and fifty thousand were beyond help. The remaining two hundred and fifty thousand starving ones could yet be saved. Among these were Anita's father and sister.

These two living skeletons appeared

like lepers. Their shriveled flesh lay on their bones like parchment.

Each wore but one garment; neither had shoes; both were bareheaded, with no roof but the sky.

They had slept in the gutters every night for months. They waited eagerly for death, wondering why it did not come.

And who was directly responsible for their suffering? This same Colonel Garcia, whom they now saw heading the battalion that had just arrived in Matanzas. He it was who had confiscated Señor Verona's estate, who had intended to kill all his family. Instead, realizing that he had only wounded Señor Verona and his youngest daughter, the colonel carried them off and threw them, wounded and bleeding, into the

streets of Matanzas and left them. There they had been ever since—that is, for more than two years. The Spanish soldiers would not let them go out. They knew not what had become of the other members of the family—mother and Anita.

To-night into the lives of these two came the first ray of light, of hope, they had known for two years. The father beheld his other daughter, Anita, fainting but alive. And the sister saw again her childhood's playmate, and she would have wept had she the necessary strength.

For to weep needs a strength which the starving do not possess.

The sight of her father and sister seemed to cure Anita of her weakness as by magic. She sprang up, kissed the

poor, shriveled hands of her father, and then of her sister.

"Together again," she cried. "Oh, father, we have suffered cruelly. We will not part again. Surely they will let you go with me. You shall have the food they throw to me."

Just then Colonel Garcia rode up. "Here, here! What's this—prisoner talking with reconcentrado swine. Sergeant, we camp here to-night. Put the prisoner in solitary confinement at headquarters."

And before Anita understood what was happening she was torn again from her father and sister.

Headquarters meant the house which the colonel was to occupy. His lieutenants had scoured the town, and picking out the house with the fullest larder,

they took possession in the name of the Queen Regent of Spain as quarters for their commander.

To this house Anita was taken, or rather dragged. She was thrown into a place at the back of the courtyard, evidently the stable. She cared not where she was. She wanted to die. Her proud nature had been bent by that day's horrors. This last act of cruelty that tore her again from her father and sister—ah! she could stand no more. She gave up, she surrendered. With these tyrants in the land, how could Cuba ever become free? Exterminate one tyrant and Spain sent over another to take his place. And Spain had already sent over two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers. Still the war waged and still Cuba wore the yoke of tyranny.

Anita had lost all heart, all hope, all courage, all care. She hoped she would die before morning. She slept the sleep of exhaustion.

In the dead of night a noise awoke her. She saw the stable door opening and a man's form stepping through. He carried a small lantern. It was Colonel Garcia. He turned to close the door behind him. The next instant there was a little cry of surprise and alarm, another cry of hatred and satisfaction. Colonel Garcia staggered backward, then fell to the floor, like a stone.

Colonel Garcia was dead. A machete had been driven into his heart. By whom?

Anita saw another form coming through the doorway. It was her father. He picked up the lantern dropped by

the dead colonel, and held it up till its light fell on the trembling Anita.

“Hist!”

The feeble old man of bones and skin came and knelt by his daughter.

“Daughter, he is dead. He deserved his death. It is the fruit of his life. But still I fear. That machete was given to me after dark by a lieutenant named Casses.”

Anita started.

“This Casses,” continued the father, “met me in the darkest street and said: ‘Your daughter is confined at headquarters, the house occupied by the commander. He ordered her to be placed in solitary confinement. Go there at midnight and you will find that her confinement is by no means solitary. You would like to have vengeance upon

the destroyer of your home, your peace, your life. Here is a machete. I hope you know how to use it.' And then, daughter, that lieutenant disappeared."

"And now I reappear," said a voice behind them. "Señor Verona, if you seek safety, follow me. Here is your daughter, Donalita. I have brought her, I have food for all. Anita, I command you, follow. In the morning when the colonel's body is discovered there will go up a bloodthirsty howl for your father's head. For on the handle of the machete in the colonel's breast is carved the name of Verona."

"Scoundrel!" cried Anita, rising. "Up to your dastardly tricks again. I know what this latest trick means. You wanted Colonel Garcia out of the way. He knew too much about my father's

estate and about those papers you stole from Ceuta. You wanted an excuse, also, to take my father and sister to Havana. You want the whole family under your charge, under one key. You have accomplished your wishes. We will go with you. We could not be worse off in Havana, even in a dungeon, than we are here in the streets of Matanzas."

Half an hour later a locomotive and one car left Matanzas station, by order of Lieutenant Casses, who was aboard with three prisoners. Four hours later the train reached Havana. The lieutenant and his prisoners reached Morro Castle just at daybreak.

"I will see Alphonso at last," Anita murmured softly.

One of the guards was giving the lieutenant hurried information.

"To Cabanas, then," said Casses. And once more Anita was disappointed. At her journey's end she hoped to be placed at least in the same prison with Alphonso.

Not so; she and her father and her sister, for some reason not known to her, were locked up in Cabanas—a prison far more terrible than that of Morro, for in Cabanas, whenever room was needed for more prisoners, the occupants of the cells were made to draw lots, one prisoner in every ten drawing a bit of paper that read, "To be shot."

Anita and her fellow-prisoners were given the two last cells—her father in No. 12, Donalita and Anita in No. 13. number thirteen.

CHAPTER XIX.

HAVANA, meanwhile, was half in mourning and half war mad.

On the morning after the blowing up of the Maine Spanish officers winked at each other as if to say, "I told you so." All day long extras were cried on the streets—extras quoting the American papers of that date. "The United States will hold Spain responsible." "Maine blown up from outside by floating mine or torpedo." "War sure between America and Spain."

Such was the news cabled Havana from New York and Washington.

The Tramp had been turned into a

floating hospital, and every berth was occupied by a wounded or dying sailor.

Otherwise, the dead and wounded were carried ashore, either to the Havana hospital or to the morgue. The total loss of American sailors was two hundred and sixty-six.

The New York newspapers, the very day of the accident, started many of their best men for Havana. The *Diurnal* cabled Dick Van West to do his best until help could reach him.

Miss Daisy and Mrs. Van Holland remained aboard the Tramp, acting as nurses.

The senator hustled here and there, giving money and his services for the benefit of the Maine sailor-boys, both dead and living.

Anita had not been heard from. Sir

Charles Bluntly and his party gave her up as drowned. Casses, whom Dick recognized aboard the Tramp as Anita's enemy, had made good his escape during the confusion of that awful night. All Anita's friends knew, therefore, was that the boat carrying the gagged and helpless girl and Casses was swamped.

On the third day after the disaster the Tramp started for Key West, to take the wounded sailors to the hospital in that place. All the Tramp party were aboard excepting— Ah! how they missed those two who had arrived with them in Havana only a few days before. The Don was in a dungeon of Morro. Anita was—where? Drowned? Dick was everywhere, doing what four correspondents ordinarily would.

And certain it was that Dick, accord-

ing to orders from his paper, did all he could to bring about a war between the United States and Spain. The second day after the explosion he determined to take certain photographs of the fortifications in the harbor. He started in with Morro Castle. Beneath its wall, near the water's edge, he set up his camera. A soldier on the parapet ordered the intruder off. Dick pretended not to understand. The soldier aimed his gun. Dick, by that time, had taken the picture. So he calmly picked up his camera and walked off. He immediately sent a long cable to the *Diurnal* reading:

“The war begins. First shots fired by Spain this morning at an American. Not one shot, but many were fired by the soldiers on the parapet of Morro Castle. How the *Diurnal* correspondent took valuable photographs of the castle amid a hailstorm of Spanish bullets.”

As events proved this cablegram got Dick into serious trouble.

The day the Tramp returned from Key West Dick promptly boarded her as she dropped anchor. He looked tired. He had been at high pressure now for four days. He expected several good men from the *Diurnal* on the steamer from New York which would reach Havana the next day. Meanwhile, he had been working like a slave.

"And by jingo!" he blurted out, "I tell you I must have a wife at once. Must have a wife. Any old wife, you know—or keep on getting beaten by the *Earth*."

"Blowing whales and wailing blowers!" roared Sir Charles. "Dick's gone clean mad."

"Not a bit," protested Dick. "I tell

you that *Earth* man is beating me, scooping me, getting the news first, you know, every day. How? Well, he is married, and I am not. Must have one, though. Say, Daisy, dear, how soon could you marry a fellow? Say, at—er—um—before dinner, to-night?"

"One minute, Dick," said Miss Daisy's mother, laughing. "How will a wife keep you from being beaten on the news?"

"Well, I'll tell you," explained Dick, talking to the party generally, but looking only at Miss Daisy. "That *Earth* man's wife is pretty. She has a fine figure and a sweet face and a pleasant tongue. She dresses well. Now, don't you see, the Spanish officials like a pretty girl. The *Earth* man lets them speak to his wife. They lose their

heads and blurt out news. That's the way the *Earth* man gets in his fine work. But wait; I, too, will produce a wife. And I will let the Spanish officials speak to her. And her figure, her face, her tongue and her clothes—why, these qualities in my wife will so outshine those of the *Earth's* that the Spanish officials will want me to interview them four times a day and invite me to every blessed breakfast and dinner served in the palace. Well, good-by. Got to go over to what is left of the Maine and get that busy chaplain to marry me to a wife to-night. You will be ready, won't you, Day? I'll depend upon you, you know. We can marry right here on board. I'll bring the chaplain over."

And Dick ran down the boarding steps, while the whole party on the

Tramp gave way to uncontrollable laughter.

At six o'clock that evening, as Dick was leaving the hotel on his way to the harbor, the Tramp, and a wife, a telegram was handed him. It was in cipher, and meant something that made Dick swear. "Well," he added, to himself, "the Don's going to get out just the same. Darn mean of the United States government not to let the *Diurnal* have those plans. I'll bet a column space rate that one of the officers in charge of the castle has plans. But first, my wedding." And Dick called a volante, jumped in. "Machina," he cried, and off he rolled.

At the Machina (the wharf) he found the chaplain of the Maine waiting.

"Good for you, old man," cried Dick.

"Yes, we've been in love for years. Might as well marry to-night as any time."

While speaking, he noticed a Spanish officer was eyeing him closely. As he was about to get into the boat this officer stepped forward and laid a detaining hand on Dick's arm.

"One moment," said the officer, "we want you."

"What for?" asked Dick.

"For this," and the officer produced a copy of the *Diurnal* containing the cablegram in which Dick had said, "The war begins."

"This is a lie," said the officer.

"And so I go with you to——"

"Morro," said the officer.

"Exactly what I wanted," cried Dick, turning hurriedly to the chaplain of the

Maine. "Say, old chap, tell Sir Charles that I——"

"Come," said the officer. For as Dick addressed the chaplain in English, the Spaniard could not understand.

"With pleasure," said Dick in Spanish. Then, in English, "Chaplain, tell Sir Charles I say he can get us all out. Offer any old price to the adjutant in command of Morro, and he can obtain secret plans of the underground exits. Tell the bride I will marry her just the same, soon as Sir Charles gets the plans to me. Ta-ta!"

CHAPTER XX.

THAT same evening Señora Isabella was sitting in a rocking chair in her house in the Prado. She was in full evening toilette. A very proper area of her dazzling white skin was displayed. She showed signs of impatience.

“Why does not that idiot come?” she murmured. “Must I keep a dinner at the palace waiting just for that fool? No! I’ll go alone.”

And accordingly she went away alone. Half an hour later Lieutenant Casses walked into the room. “And so she’s gone without me, has she? Perhaps she’s glad. Well! I’ll teach her a

lesson before I get through with her. Hello, who's that?"

Some one was mounting the stairs—a feminine step.

It was a young woman who from the waist up was dressed exactly like a man. For coolness and nerve and business ability Casses later declared he had never met her equal among womankind.

"Oh, be seated," the young woman said. "I know you. You are Lieutenant Casses, adjutant-commandante of Morro Castle. Your boatman at the Machina told me you lived here, so here I am. I am Lady Bluntly. I want to buy the plans of the underground passages of Morro Castle."

"Ah, dear lady," began Casses, "I really, er——"

"Quit all that," said Lady Bluntly.

"I'm in a hurry. Produce the plans and name your price. I'll pay spot cash."

Gold! Exactly what Lieutenant Casses needed more than anything else in the world. He was not as rich a fool as Señora Isabella believed him to be.

"The plans," he said. "But I have not the plans. I don't know where they are. I would not sell them if I had."

"Now, Lieutenant Casses, stop lying and come to business. I know you by reputation. Here is something that will compel you to deliver to me those plans. And Lady Bluntly produced a stained, water-soaked paper.

"This little document," she said, "was brought up from the bottom of the harbor to-day, and given to me as being simply a relic, and of no account. Well, it is of great value, as you know. It

proves that you stole certain papers from your government station, the prison colony of Ceuta; that you converted them to your own use, and that all they need now is the signature of Anita Verona. Well, what is your price for the plans? What? You must answer. Well, I'll name the price for you. Here is what is equal to twenty-five thousand dollars in American money—enough to last you the rest of your life. Now hand over the plans and sign this receipt,”

“But, señora, I have not the plans handy; I don't carry them about. I will have to go to the castle. You must wait till to-morrow—not that I have agreed to let you have them, though.

“Oh, yes, you have,” said Lady Bluntly promptly. “And they are in this house in the cabinet of a certain Señora Isabella.

You see, I was a newspaper woman before my marriage, and still have the knack of ferreting out any desired information I want. Now, produce the plans—or shall I send this water-soaked paper to the captain-general?”

Casses sprang up. “No, no! Don’t do that. I’ll see if I can find the papers.” And he hurried into an inner room, Isabella’s bedroom.

Lady Bluntly heard a rasping sound, as of filing, then a hammering, then a crash. Next moment Casses reappeared and handed her a document. Lady Bluntly opened and looked it over carefully.

“All right,” she said. “Sign this receipt.”

“No, señora, I will sign nothing. What is it you ask of me? Commit a

crime, then sign my own death warrant? No."

"But I say yes," insisted Lady Bluntly. "You won't? All right! here are your plans. Now, I'll go to the captain-general with this paper you stole from Ceuta."

"One moment," said Casses, an evil light appearing in his eyes as he sprang between Lady Bluntly and the door. "You evidently forget where you are."

"Oh, no, I don't," replied Lady Bluntly smilingly; and she produced a revolver which she handled in a way that showed an easy familiarity with the weapon. "Nor do I forget that I am the wife of an English nobleman. But perhaps you have changed your mind in regard to giving me your autograph."

"Give me that receipt," said Casses,

thoroughly cowed. And he signed, folded, and handed it back to Lady Bluntly.

Lady Bluntly, elated with the success of her interview, handed Casses the money.

As she had seen Casses sign the receipt, she did not bother to examine the signature.

"But there's something you have forgotten," said Casses, as Lady Bluntly started to go. "That—that Ceuta document."

"Oh, yes," Lady Bluntly said. "I guess perhaps you *are* entitled to have this. There!" She threw the watersoaked paper on the table and went away.

Casses pocketed his money, threw himself into a chair and cursed for five minutes without a pause.

Why did he curse? He now had wealth. What else could he want? Perhaps he would like to have that receipt back. He sprang up and rushed into Señora Isabella's room and removed the signs of the force he had used in breaking open her desk. Then he sat down and waited.

At ten o'clock Señora Isabella, resplendent, magnificent, appeared.

"Well," said Casses, "the birds are all jugged—I want my reward."

"Where were you at six?" asked the señora, ignoring his remarks.

"I was juggling the last of the pigs—that newspaper correspondent. He's in the dungeon next to the Don. They can have a nice time talking through the air-hole in the wall."

"What about the rest of the party?"

"Can't arrest any more, Isabel. Sir Charles Bluntly is an English subject; his wife is an American, but I guess that newspaper correspondent is all the Americans Morro can stand at once. His paper will make things uncomfortable for us. There's that senator—he's gone to Matanzas to look after the reconcentrados. And we couldn't very well arrest his wife and daughter. So that's all. I've jailed those you wanted out of the way—now I want my reward."

"You want your reward," sneered the señora. "All right, I am ready to marry you."

Casses twisted in his chair uneasily.

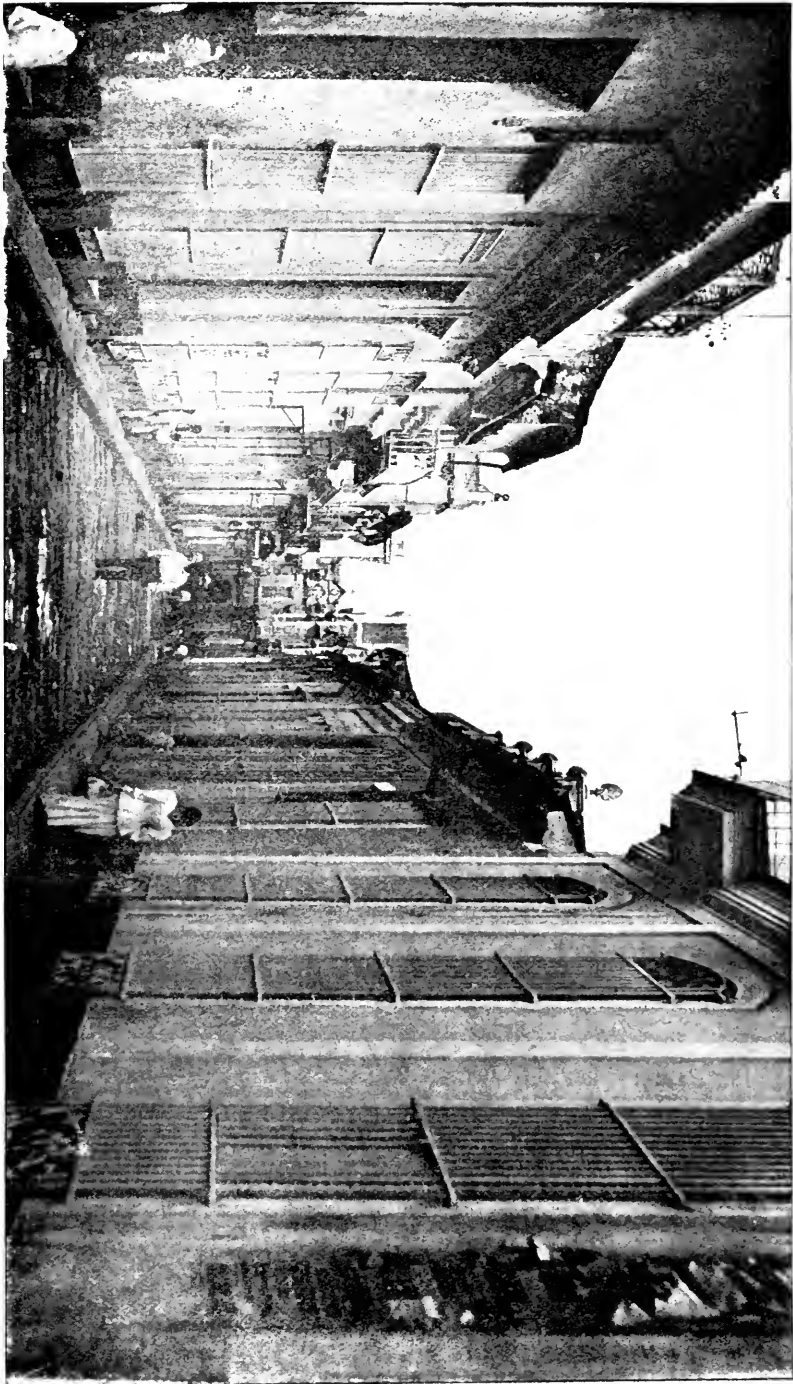
"Marry me, Isabella, I might as well tell you now—I can't. I've a wife and children in Madrid. This has only been play, you know—just play between us."

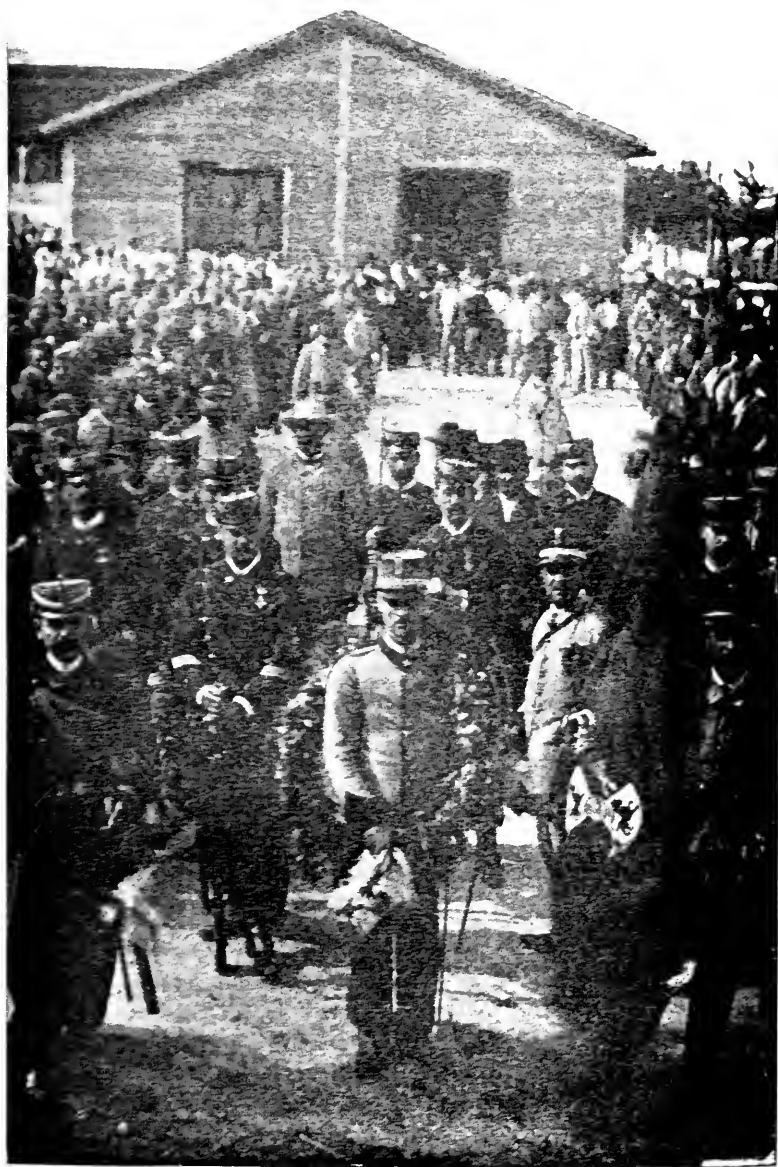
"It has, has it?" said Isabella absent-mindedly. She had picked up the watersoaked document from the table. "Well, where did this come from? Did you have the harbor dragged—just for this, or were you looking for bodies of the Maine men? Ah, you want this document, do you? Well, when you marry me you can have it. I need money myself. I'll see the Señorita Anita. You say she is in Cabanas, cell No. 13. All right, perhaps she will sign for me, when she would not sign for you."

Casses looked more and more uncomfortable. "Oh, don't bother the señorita," he said, "not if you only want money. I can let you have—that is, I can give you some money when I get my pay. Besides, the señorita may not—

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In the streets of Havana. O'Reilly street; narrowest in the city.





Copyright 1901 by H. P. Tennyson.

Havana. Arrival of last shipload of Spanish troops. Sunday, March

that is, Cabanas is full. We need room for new prisoners. The Don's filibusters are all in Cabanas. In the morning they draw lots, you understand?"

"Perfectly," said Isabella, "I understand that if I'm to get the senorita to sign this document, I must see her soon after daylight. This is a very convenient paper to have, Casses—it would show the government how loyal you are, for instance."

"Don't fool with me," responded Casses angrily. "Remember that I happen to know that you also are a loyal spy. You stole the underground plans the last time you visited the commandante of Morro Castle. But of course you are safe. The commandante may never need the plans."

"That reminds me of a commission I

want you to execute for me," said Isabella. "It was foolish of me to take those plans. I have no use for them. I am going to give them to you and you will restore them to their place in the commandante's room."

And Isabella went into her room to get the papers.

She found her desk unlocked—indeed the lock appeared to have been forced open.

The plans were gone.

She rushed back to the reception-room.

Cassés was not there.

CHAPTER XXI.

AFTER the Spanish officer had taken Dick into custody the chaplain of the Maine stepped into his boat, and told the boatman to row out to the Tramp.

He rushed up the boarding steps. Miss Daisy received him at the gangway. "But where is the bridegroom?" she said laughingly. "I mean, where's Dick?" she added anxiously.

"Now, little girl, don't worry," said the chaplain soothingly. "Your Dick has been arrested and taken to Morro Castle. But never mind, we're going to get him out this very night. And not only him, but Don Alphonso, and all the

Don's men, to boot. Where is Sir Charles?"

Sir Charles and the ladies — Lady Bluntly and Mrs. Van Holland — are seated aft waiting for the bridal party. They were all of the sort who would give their consent to a hasty marriage, such as Dick had proposed, and think it not only great fun but very right and natural.

"See you one moment, Sir Charles," said the chaplain, approaching.

Sir Charles joined the chaplain while Daisy joined the ladies and told them what had happened to Dick.

The chaplain and the baronet went into the saloon. "I cannot give you but five minutes," said he of the priestly garb, "because as an officer of the United States I'd better not mix in the plan which I am about to propose. I would

take a hand in it, mind you, if it were not that my doing so might in some way affect the findings of the court of inquiry now investigating the cause of the wrecking of the *Maine*. Well, to come to the point, have you much money, cash, aboard?"

"Pot - hooks and tarpaulins, yes," roared the baronet. "Want some? Name the amount, and by the top-gallant light sails, you——"

"Not so loud, Sir Charles," pleaded the chaplain. "I've only now to add that the plans of the underground passages of Morro can be bought. It seems that Dick's paper, the *Diurnal*, discovered the plans in some way or other, last year, and gave the same to our government. Since the Don was thrown into Morro Castle Dick has asked his

paper to borrow those plans for him from the government. Uncle Sam has refused. Now Dick says you can buy the plans from one of the officers of the castle, and thus get them all out of prison. Good-by. I wish you every luck." And the chaplain hurried aft, said good-by to the ladies, then left the Tramp.

He had hardly gone when Senator Van Holland rushed up the steps. The senator had been away more than a week, investigating the condition of the reconcentrados in the interior of Cuba, with a view to getting the United States to send relief. The party on the Tramp were not surprised, as they had expected to see him earlier in the day. "Now there's no time to waste," said the senator. "Let us sit down here and

plan. We will work together. I find that the Don and Dick and all the Don's men must be gotten out of Morro and Cabanas to-night. If we do not get them out to-night they will be shot at sunrise. I have further news—I have found Anita. I traced her all the way from Matanzas. Found her father, too, and her sister. They also are in Cabanas. It seems that Morro is reserved for political prisoners and Cabanas for prisoners of war. Now the Don and Dick, as political prisoners of the first class, are in Morro. But all the Don's men that manned the seven ships are in Cabanas.

“The filibusters have discovered that Anita is among them and there is great excitement.

“They call her, openly, right in the face of the guards, ‘The Cuban heroine.’

"How did I discover Anita and her family? Well, in Matanzas a soldier offered to sell me a machete. I looked at it. On the handle was carved the name Verona. As that was the same as Anita's name I bought the machete. The soldier said it had been buried in the heart of one Colonel Garcia by a starving reconcentrado. The colonel had evil designs on the reconcentrado's daughter.

"In the pursuit of evil he met his death. I inquired who these Veronas were, and decided, at last, that I had found the family of Anita, if not Anita herself. I learned that a special train had left Matanzas on the night of the murder of the colonel. On that train was a Lieutenant Casses—we all know of him through Anita—and with him

were two young girls and an old man. That settled it. I knew I was on the right track. Arriving in Havana an hour ago I drove straight to Morro Castle and, as a United States senator, demanded an audience with the commandante.

“Meanwhile, I had learned from the cabman of the arrest of the *Diurnal* correspondent and I knew that he must be—my future son-in-law. I asked the commandante for a guarantee that the lives of the American prisoners in his charge were safe. He gave me the guarantee smilingly. What did he care? His guarantee is worth nothing. My mission to Morro Castle was accomplished—but then what did it amount to? On the way back to the town from Morro I began talking to the cabman. I discovered that he was a Spanish spy. I

knew that he would sell any information for money. I gave him money and learned what I told you when I first came aboard. Besides, I discovered that the underground plans can be bought from Senor Casses, or from a certain Senora Isabella, in a house in the Prado. Now, here is my plan. Lady Bluntly goes ashore at once, sees the Senora Isabella and buys the plans. I go ashore and see the harbor master and chief of harbor police and buy their consent to our sailing to-night. You, Sir Charles, go aboard that Spanish transport—the black one lying off the fort now. She sails to-morrow morning with prisoners under life sentence for Ceuta. You will buy her captain—you understand?”

“Blowing whales and gatling guns, of

course I understand. Here, wifey, here is money. Go buy Isabella. Senator, go buy your harbor men with your own money, while I buy the captain of the Ceuta transport."

And half an hour later Lady Bluntly intruded upon Casses at the house in the Prado, as described.

Lady Bluntly and the senator returned to the Tramp together, both successful. The baronet's wife had the secret plans and a receipt for the same. The senator had a clearance paper, with a big blank space left to fill in as many passengers as he pleased. This blank clearance paper was signed.

All of which shows that any Spanish official in Havana can be bought for spot cash.

Meanwhile, the baronet had gone forth

to the transport. He was no diplomat. He was even more blunt than his wife.

On board the transport he demanded that he be taken direct to the captain's room.

Sir Charles had put on his uniform as vice-commander of the Royal Yacht Squadron of England. The men on the transport, mistaking him for an admiral at least, conducted him straightway to the captain's room.

"Oh, Mars and muskmelons, Cap!" roared the baronet. "That's all right, keep your seat. Give me a drink, and then accept this little present I have brought you." And Sir Charles threw a roll of gold on the table.

"Now, Cap, you sail for Ceuta in the morning, don't you? Prisoners for life for the most damnable place among the

hells on earth. Well, here's another little present I brought over from the Tramp. Now, when you sail in the morning, you'll be ordered to follow my ship. Well, damn it, here's another little present. You follow me, you see. You catch me. You board me. You search my ship for escaped prisoners. Well, if you find nothing, you have a drink with me and return to your transport with presents double the amount of those that lie on this table now. Good luck and fair winds, Cap. See you off the coast in the morning."

Five minutes after the baronet had returned to the Tramp the yacht was under way. She sailed out of the harbor and past Morro Castle with no challenge or sign of curiosity from the fortress.

Meanwhile, the whole party had been studying the plans which were spread out on a table in the saloon. The exterior entrance to the passage was at a point two miles down the coast. They were now steaming slowly toward this point. It was at last agreed that Sir Charles and Senator Van Holland should traverse the passage until they entered Morro. By a strange coincidence the passage led directly into dungeon 47, the one occupied by Don Alphonso. Moreover, the passage then continued underground through the intervening acre or two that separated Morro from Cabanas. In Cabanas the secret passage opened into cell 13. They knew not who occupied that cell, but the two men decided to take their chances.

The senator had the forethought to

bring aboard a pilot (also a *purchas*) who knew every inch of the coast. That pilot had been shown the plans and was now guiding the Tramp toward the spot indicated as being the entrance to the secret passage. The skipper of the yacht stood over the pilot, a revolver in his hand. Incidentally he had politely informed the purchased pilot that upon the first indication of treachery the contents of the revolver would be poured into him.

At last, after steaming at snail's pace for more than an hour, the pilot gave the signal to stop, then to back water. He kept on backing water until the stern of the yacht almost touched a huge black rock. They were evidently in a deep-water cove, completely hidden by the formation of the shore. The anchors

were dropped. The pilot ordered a gangplank to be swung from the stern rail to the flat rock. The order was obeyed, and Sir Charles and Senator Van Holland stepped ashore.

The yacht was to wait for their return. In the event of misadventure—that is, if they were not on board by nine o'clock in the morning—the Tramp was to sail over to Key West at full speed, so as to save the ladies, and inform the United States government that a senator and a baronet had been caught in the secret passage of Morro Castle.

No time was wasted in *adios*. The two men knew the plans by heart. Sir Charles had them in his pocket in case they were needed. Each man had a dark-lantern. They turned on the light, found a barred gate behind the big flat

rock, as indicated in the plans. Here the difficulties of rescuing people from an enemy's fortress began. The iron gate was locked. It was evidently intended for egress more than for ingress. So Sir Charles returned to the yacht and brought back two heavy files. In ten minutes they had filed away one bar. There was now a breach wide enough to admit the senator. But the chubby baronet—no, he could not get through. So they were obliged to spend another ten minutes filing through another bar.

They retained the files, and it was very fortunate they did.

As they stepped into the vault-like passage they were greeted by a rush of foul air. They pushed on. They were obliged to stoop, as the passage was not

higher than their shoulders. It was a steep walk. To call it a walk is not accurate—it was an ascent. The ooze and slime and cobwebs of a hundred years were underfoot, overhead, and on each side of them. Rats by the hundred went squeaking down the noisome corridor; scorpions scuttled away in myriads, seeking shelter in the crevices.

Beneath their feet crushed innumerable bones. The rats evidently lived by preying on each other and picking the bones bare. Only the strongest and biggest could survive. A race of phenomenally large rats had sprung up there.

Occasionally the roof came so close to the floor that the two men had to crawl through on their hands and knees.

“This is an old scheme devised in the

last century," said the senator. "These low places are all ready to form what is called a cave-in. In case of pursuit, you pull out one or two bricks and the whole thing caves in, thus blocking the enemy and perhaps killing him."

They pushed on and on for more than an hour; remembering that the passage must be at least two miles long, their patience survived.

At last they came to a solid wall. It seemed to be the end of the passage. They searched, but could find no further outlet.

"Then this," said the senator, "must be the wall of dungeon No. 47. If my information is correct Don Alphonso is on the other side of this wall."

Bludgeons and blunderbusses!" said Sir Charles. "There is only one way to

find out where we are at. That is by knocking a hole in that wall."

"But, how?" asked the senator.

"How? Ramshorns and torpedoes! don't you see how? You have a revolver, so have I. The bullets are big. We'll try shooting at the wall—it is old and crumbling and seems to be mostly ancient plaster. Now, senator, old boy, you shoot at the same place and— Oh, Lord! look out for rebounding bullets."

Whereupon the baronet fired a shot, aiming in such a way that the bullet grazed the wall. This experiment promised success. The bullet dug a ridge in the wall. The next bullet made the ridge deeper.

Each had emptied his revolver twice—that is, twenty-eight shots had been fired at the wall, when of a sudden, through

what remained of the wall, came a missile, clashing. And a voice cried: "Hey there, what are you fellows up to? Oh, it's you, Charlie, and you, papa-in-law. Well, come in. You'll have to wriggle through. Sorry I can't have a servant see to your comfort—but— Gee whiz, if you had kept on shooting, you would have shot Dickey, and then Daisy would have been a widow before being a bride. Well, I expected you."

This was the ever-sanguine, ever-buoyant Dick Van West, sure enough.

It took only a few minutes to discover why the two rescuers had found Dick instead of the Don. The secret passage had originally opened into dungeon 47, but dungeon 48 had been added, and this was Dick's present home. Now, according to the plans, they had reached

the wall that should contain an opening into dungeon 47. This opening consisted of stone, so peculiarly formed that pushing it even gently, at one side, it would swing on a pivot. They found the stone, at least they discovered its outlines.

They pressed one side. It opened.

They stepped into dungeon 47, and into the arms of Don Alphonso.

Poor Alphonso de Castro! His condition was by no means as forlorn as after that period of starvation in his own house in New York. For here he had bread and water, at least. But he looked badly enough. He was wasted away almost to a skeleton. His fine brow was still there, and his handsome features were still noble. But his physique, the pride of his life, was broken. He looked a complete physical wreck.

But there was no time to sorrow with the Don; just a few words of sympathy and then he was informed of all that had taken place and what must yet be accomplished before daybreak.

“Give me the plans,” said the Don. “Now, gentlemen, you have done your duty. You have risked your lives for me. Now it is my turn to risk mine for Anita, and I beg of you to respect my wishes. You will all three of you return to the entrance of the passage—that is, to the yacht. You will wait for me. You say that Anita and her father and sister and all my men are in Cabanas. These plans show that this subterranean passage leads directly into cell No. 13 at Cabanas. The adventure does not require three men. I am equal to it alone. Or if some must die in the attempt, one

life will be better than four. Gentlemen, I beseech you, leave me. I will think a moment, and then proceed to Cabanas. My God, what is this?"

While talking the Don had been looking over the plans which Sir Charles had handed to him. A slip of paper, separated from the document and fell to the floor. The Don had picked it up. It was a receipt given for twenty-five thousand dollars for the sale of the plans of Morro, and it was signed—Isabella de Castro.

The Don read the signature over and over again aloud. He laughed a hoarse laugh that was more tragic than anything that occurred that night.

"Gentlemen, this little slip of paper will be the means of punishing the one responsible for all our misery. My hand

need not be lifted now, however. This incriminating receipt will be sufficient. I will leave it here, so." In open view, on the heap of rags which he called his bed, the don laid the receipt signed Isabella de Castro.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN the prison of Cabanas fortress, as already stated, Anita and her sister Donalita were in cell No. 13. The father of the two wretched girls was in No. 12.

In the cells up and down that corridor were Don Alphonso's men—eighty-four in all. For each of the Don's seven ships had carried a crew of twelve men. In some of the cells were as many as fifteen men. They were huddled together in dirt and filth. Once a day they were given black bread, as hard as stone, and brackish water. This had been their life ever since the presence of those pack-

ages of arms had led to their incarceration.

Anita had now been in cell 13 for nearly a month. She still wore what was left of the trousers and coat given to her by one of the brave forty at Coral Island.

When the eighty-four men in the adjoining cells heard that the Señorita Anita Verona was in No. 13, they gave three cheers for "Anita, the Cuban heroine." And they had continued to give these cheers ever since, three times each day. The guards protested, threatening them with dungeons; but in vain. The men gave the usual "Three cheers for the Cuban heroine," just the same. The corridor in which all these cells were located was called the "Court of Death."

As the clock of Cabanas tolled twelve, on the night occupied by the events described in the preceding chapters, one of the prison guards entered the "Court of Death" and cried:

"*El Sorteo de Muerte*" (the draft of death).

Immediately there was a stirring in all the cells. What a cry was that with which to awaken those sleeping men! And Anita and her sister, too, heard the cry, as it was repeated:

"*El Sorteo de Muerte!*" To which the guard added that all were to stand at their cell doors and each was to draw for his life as the cap containing the fatal papers was passed along.

The "draft of death" is the newest method devised by the Spanish government to reduce the overcrowding of its

prisons in Cuba. The plan consists of the deliberate decimation of the Cuban prisoners by lot. Whenever the commander of the garrison decides that the prisons are too full, his officers force the prisoners to draw lots to determine which of them shall be shot to make room for newcomers. The drafting is done in gangs of ten, one man in each gang deciding his own fate.

To-night, in the court of death in Cabanas, this diabolical "method" was to be put into immediate execution. The lots were drawn at midnight so as to make it all the more horrible; so that those who should draw the fatal papers would know they were to be shot at daybreak.

To-night the slips were put in a cap belonging to one of the guards. The

prisoners were informed that among every ten slips of paper there was one upon which was written, "*Fusilar*," which means, "to be shot."

The drafting began. The cap was passed from one grating to another, each man drawing. Sometimes every man in a certain cell drew "*Fusilar*." In other cells not a single one drew the fatal word.

It came the turn of Anita's father. There were only three slips left. He drew—"Fusilar."

Next and last came the turns of Anita and her sister.

There were now only two slips. Anita took both. She had hopes of giving a blank slip to her sister. On both slips was written "*Fusilar*."

The guards laughed. They joked

among each other. Anita listened, appalled, bewildered. Could all this be true? Had she only a few weeks ago been the pet of the American people, the heroine from Cuba? Had she only so recently been a guest on that palatial yacht, the Tramp? Had she really only a month ago stood on the deck of that yacht, by the side of Don Alphonso? She remembered how she kissed him. She remembered the love in his eyes as he looked at her. She had exacted of him that he prove his love for her. Surely he had proved it. Where was he now? Ah, she would never see him again. All was lost, even Cuba's freedom. And she and her family were to be ignominiously exterminated at day-break. Spanish bullets were to end their lives, after all.

But what were the guards gossiping about? There were four of them. They stood near the grating of Anita's cell. She could hear all they said. They were snickering and telling one another how their duties would be lessened on the morrow, "for all who were not to die were to be sent in the transport to Ceuta."

The guards moved away. All in the cells were now in darkness.

"Poor, poor men," murmured Anita. "Better to be shot at once than to go to that slow death at Ceuta."

"Hist!"

"What was that?" said Donalita, creeping close to her sister.

"Hist!"

The sound came out of the darkness, not menacingly, but warningly. It

seemed to come from the floor in one corner of the room.

“Hist!”

Whoever kept repeating this warning cry did so evidently to attract Anita to a certain part of the room.

She began feeling her way. At last a hand clutched her foot at the ankle.

“Hist! Anita,” said a voice under her. The voice seemed to come up through a hole in the floor. She drew her foot from the clutching hand and knelt down.

“My Anita,” said the voice.

The Cuban girl put out her hand and touched a head. She felt of it. It was a mass of silken curls. She ran her fingers from the curls down over the features of the face. As if by the touch she knew.

“Alphonso,” she whispered.

"Listen," said the voice below. "We must not talk one minute longer than necessary. I have a way for you and all the men to escape. This is a trap-door. The missing stone slides into the floor. I will close it when I leave. But at the moment of daybreak I will open it for you. I've been here some time, listening. This is what you are to do."

And after whispering his plans the don closed the sliding stone.

Exactly at daybreak four guards entered the "court of death," two at each end. All the cell doors were thrown open and the men told to assemble in the corridor. All the men who had drawn "*Fusilar*" were to form in one line. The rest were to form another line—ready to march aboard the transport *en route* for Ceuta prison colony.

At hearing these last words the men who were not to die began howling, "No, no! Let us die. Shoot us."

At this moment Anita stepped forth. Her father and sister stood beside her ready to say the saddest of farewells. They had only one consolation: they were to die together—the last of the Veronas—the last of the proudest and richest of Cuban families.

"Three cheers for Anita, the Cuban heroine," cried the men:

Now was Anita's moment.

Her clear voice rang out: "Men, there are only four guards. You are eighty-four. Do nothing till I give the word. The guards cannot understand a word of English. Eight of you gather round the guards, two ready to silence each guard. All ready! Now do your work silently.

Do not kill, simply render these blackguards unconscious. When I give the signal all excepting the eight men rush to my cell. There is a hole in the floor big enough to admit four men at a time. You will land in the secret underground passage that leads to Morro. One whom you all love is ready there now to guide you. The passage leads to Morro and under it, two miles further, to the sea, where a yacht is waiting to take us to freedom. The last man to jump through the trapdoor here must close the sliding stone. The last man to pass a place beyond Morro, so small that he has to crawl on hands and knees, must pull a projecting brick out from overhead. This will cause a cave-in and check underground pursuit. Ready!"

And Anita clapped her hands.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A HUMAN mass perched on the outer walls of Cabanas. On the hills above were some two thousand of Havana's populace. They were all looking down in the yard of the prison. All had assembled to see the most horrible of spectacles. Public notice had been given that a wholesale execution of offenders against the government of Spain would take place at daybreak. The Spanish always wanted the populace to witness these executions. The spectacle would serve as an example to all rebels.

In the yard all the Spanish officials and officers of the garrison and of Spain's army in Havana were assembled.

Around the captain-general was the usual group of bowing and scraping sycophants. Every other word uttered by these officers was some empty compliment offered to "Mi General."

On one side was a squad of twenty picked men, sharpshooters every one. They were in command of a first lieutenant. This was the "squad of execution." The wholesale slaughter which was about to take place was conducted in a most artistic way. One man was shot at a time. This was meant to prolong the agony of those to follow. All who were not to be shot were to be drawn up in line to witness the execution of their comrades before being transported to Ceuta for life.

As each man should take his place to be shot, four out of the squad of twenty

were to step forward and fire. Then the next victim was to step into place and another four out of the squad of twenty would step forward and fire. Each victim was to have his arms tied behind him, to be blindfolded and to be forced to kneel down with his back to the executioners. The father of Anita Verona and his two daughters were to be reserved till the very last. Anita especially was to be honored with an execution such as had never before been vouchsafed to a rebel. The entire squad of twenty were to fire the volley that was to end her rebellious career.

It was indeed a great morning for the Spanish soldiers and a horrible morning for Cuban Havana.

The commandantes of both Morro and Cabanas were in their places, a little

apart from the group around the captain-general. With the commandantes stood their respective adjutants. Lieutenant Casses was one of the latter.

Only one woman was admitted to the court itself. She stood between Casses and the commandante of Morro, conversing in turn with each. She was superbly gowned, she was regal of bearing, her slightest movement exemplified magnificence of gracefulness. While the multitude and the officials awaited the coming of the doomed rebels, she was the center of the scene. She was a spy in the employ of Spain. She was called by every one La Senora Isabella de Castro.

The commandante of Morro showed signs of restlessness. The commandante of Cabanas displayed evidence of im-

patience. He asserted his authority. He swore at his adjutant.

The adjutant remarked that he was sorry, but the four guards in charge of the prisoners would march them out directly, in splendid order.

Ten minutes passed.

No prisoners.

The two adjutants, Casses and his fellow-officer, compared opinions, and decided to go personally to the court of death and hurry forward the star actors in the great spectacle of the morning.

They were seen to disappear through the archway leading to the court of death.

Two minutes later Casses came running back. He saluted the two commandantes and said:

“Sirs, I have to inform you that the

four guards in the court of death lay as dead and that the eighty-five men and the two women prisoners are missing."

"Escaped?" roared the commandantes, in voices thunderous and dreadful. "Go! Investigate. Make all dispatch. Take the squad of twenty with you."

"Attention! Forward, march, double-quick," ordered Casses. And the execution squad rushed pell-mell after the adjutant into the interior of the fortress.

They were gone a long time. The excitement of the populace knew no bounds. They had broken into an uproar and were shouting, "Long live Cuba! Down with Spain!"

Thunderous shouts right into the ears of the officers of her gracious majesty, Maria Theresa, Queen Regent of Spain.

La Señora Isabella bit her lip. She was vexed. Had that vixen rebel, Anita, outwitted her again? She had come here this morning to experience the pleasure of seeing a hated rival killed. Anita out of the way, she knew that she had influence enough to liberate Don Alphonso. And she hoped to win that gentleman again to her heart and side.

But what was happening? The two adjutants came running back. Behind them were, not twenty, but only five of that squad of sharpshooters. Where were their comrades?

Adjutant Casses told the story in a few words. They had discovered that the escape of the prisoners had been through a trapdoor in the cell of Anita Verona. The trap opened into the secret and subterranean passages of Cabanas

and Morro. They—the two adjutants, and the squad of twenty—had dropped into the secret passage and followed. Right after rushing through dungeons 47 and 48 under Morro, they heard the shouts of the fleeing prisoners. They came to a place where the ceiling was so low that they had to pass on their hands and knees. While their men were thus creeping under the low ceiling it suddenly caved in, crushing out the lives of fifteen of Spain's sharpshooters.

The commandantes were pacing up and down, hurling forth wonderful volleys of oaths. And each commandante finished by saying to his adjutant, "Sir, I hold you responsible for the escape of the prisoners and the death of our men. But where did these prisoners learn of

the subterranean passages? How?
And from whom?

“From the Señora Isabella de Castro,” said the exultant and, at that moment, dreadful voice of Lieutenant Casses. “Commandante,” he added, “in the dungeon of the Senor Don Alphonso, the former lover of this woman, we found this receipt.”

And the commandante took the paper and learned of the sale of the underground plans of Morro, signed—Isabella de Castro.

“It is a forgery,” said Isabella quietly. “The man who wrote my name on that paper stands before you. His name is Casses.”

“Tut, tut, spy,” said the formerly gallant commander. “Tut, tut, spy, we will not believe you. Some one has sold

the plans to the prisoners. Here is your name on the receipt. How did you get the plans?"

"She stole them, sir, from your apartments!"

Again fatal words were spoken in Casses' malicious voice. He was obviously determined to free himself at once of Isabella, and of all blame, by making a strong case against her.

"Ho, ho, so the spy is also a thief!" roared the commandante. "Well, it's a lesson. Never trust a woman."

Isabella had not shown the least sign of agitation. She now calmly produced a paper and thrust it upon the commandante, saying, "Senor, since accusations are in order, read that and find how your loyal and trusted Lieutenant Casses stole government papers of great value

from the prison colony at Ceuta. Also, you will now perhaps believe that your lieutenant might possibly be capable of forging my name to that receipt."

"We do believe you," cried the commandante, who had been reading the papers. "You are both under arrest."

And the great man of authority turned to his staff and gave some hurried orders, pointing first to Casses and Isabella, who were under arrest, and then to the transport down in the harbor—the ship which was getting ready at that moment to start for that hell on earth, the Spanish Prison Colony at Ceuta.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE hour later a big white yacht, about three miles from the coast of Cuba, was cutting through the water, her prow pointing for Key West, the first of Uncle Sam's land, ninety miles away. Everything favorable, she would sight Key West before nightfall.

But was everything favorable?

About one mile astern was another ship, a black one. As she was making twice the speed of the yacht she would overtake her prey within a short time.

She did. Both vessels, the chased and the chaser, came to a stop. The black ship put off a small boat and an officer in

the uniform of the Spanish navy boarded the yacht.

He went directly into the cabin of the yacht's owner. He remained there probably fifteen minutes. When he came out his breath indicated that he had taken one or more American drinks containing more or less whisky.

After walking once around the deck with his eyes on the far horizon, the officer bowed and was about to leave the yacht when a very worn-looking, but handsome young man stepped forward and spoke:

"Captain, you are in command of that transport? You are bound for Ceuta. May I ask how many prisoners you have aboard?"

"Two, señor."

"Their names?"

“Señor Lieutenant Casses and Señora Isabella de Castro.”

“For life, captain?”

“For life, señor.”

The transport sailed away, at last, toward Ceuta. The Tramp sailed west, for Key West.

The Tramp, beside her regular crew of one hundred men had aboard at that moment eighty-four extra sailors. These were the prisoners who had escaped that morning from Morro.

While the Spanish officer, the commander of the transport, was aboard the Tramp, these eighty-four men were walking about the forecastle, smoking and enjoying themselves after their four weeks' confinement. The Spanish commander had seen nothing; so much for

the good use of Sir Charles Bluntly's gold.

That evening the Tramp sighted Key West. The first news to reach them was that the Court of Inquiry had reported that the *Maine* was blown up by a floating mine; that the President of the United States would accept no terms from Spain short of Cuba's independence. On the people of the United States hung the fate of Anita Verona's native island, Cuba.

At twilight the eighty-four sailors were landed and given through tickets, overland, to New York and home. They were a very happy eighty-four. As the Tramp steamed away they gathered on the pier and shouted: "Hip, hip, hurrah for Don Alphonso! Hip, hip, hurrah for Sir Charles Bluntly! Three cheers for Anita Verona, the Cuban heroine!"

Anita was indeed on the Tramp. Was she happy? Ah, she was hanging on the arm of the man she loved, the man who had proved he loved her. And there was also on board her father and her sister. Her father was going to the land of liberty, to the land where he had a fortune awaiting him. Was Anita happy? Ah, who could answer that question as well as the Don, who saw the light of love in her eyes?

They were all gathered under the awning at the stern. Senator Van Holland was talking to Mrs. Holland. Sir Charles Bluntly was teasing his "wifey," Lady Bluntly. Mr. Dick and Miss Daisy—well, Miss Daisy's hand had hardly once been out of Dick's grasp since morning. And Senor Verona and his younger daughter, Donalita—language

cannot describe their feelings. To be lifted from death to life, and from such a death to such a life.

Anita and Don Alphonso gazed across the sea. On the horizon they could see the lights of a ship going east. It was the Spanish transport conveying Lieutenant Casses and Senora Isabella to Ceuta for life; to Ceuta, not as officer and spy in authority, but as political prisoners. They were on their way to the life as Anita had known it, and as we saw her living it, at the beginning of this narrative.

Anita pressed the Don's hand. The Don leaned over and kissed Anita.

"My wife," he murmured.

"My husband," she whispered.

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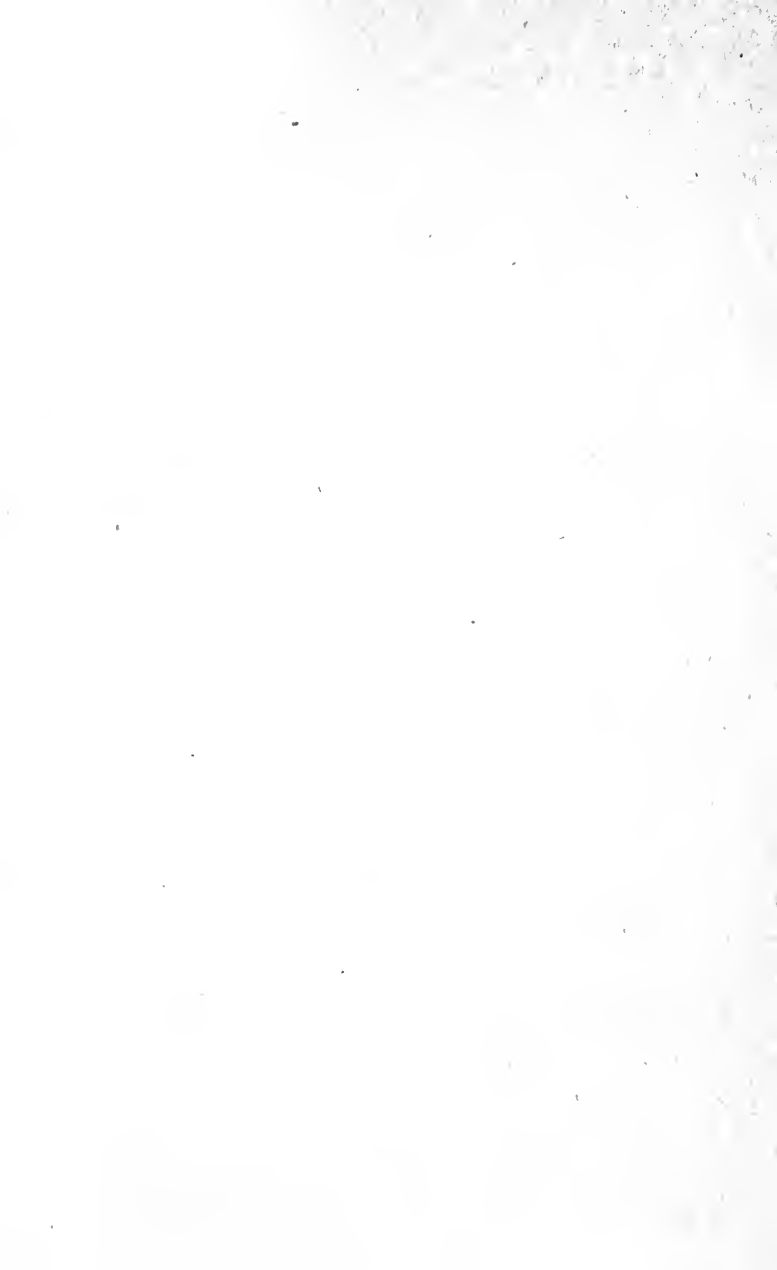
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